

LOVE IS AN ACT OF DEFIANCE

DISOBEDIENCE

DÉSOBÉISSANCE

EN SALLES LE 13/06 IN DE BIOSCOOP

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SYNOPSIS

Wanneer haar vader sterft, keert Ronit Khruska terug naar de orthodox-joodse gemeenschap die ze tientallen jaren eerder de rug toekeerde.

Ronit wordt geconfronteerd met de vijandigheid van leden van de gemeenschap, met uitzondering van haar jeugdvriend Dovid, die blij is met haar terugkeer. Tot haar ontsteltenis is hij gehuwd met Esti, waar ze vroeger stiekem verliefd op was.

Maar de passie tussen de vrouwen, die nooit gedoofd leek te zijn, laait weer hoog op...

Het scenario werd geschreven door Sebastián Lelio en Rebecca Lenkiewicz en is gebaseerd op de roman van Naomi Alderman. De hoofdrollen zijn voor Rachel Weisz, Rachel McAdams en Alessandro Nivola.

En partant vivre à Manhattan pour devenir photographe, Ronit Khruska a pris ses distances avec la communauté juive orthodoxe londonienne dans laquelle elle a grandi. Mais quand elle apprend la mort de son père, rabbin, elle décide de rentrer chez elle pour assister aux obsèques.

Ronit doit affronter l'hostilité des membres de sa communauté à l'exception de son ami d'enfance Dovid, qui semble heureux de la revoir. Mais elle est surtout bouleversée d'apprendre qu'Esti, dont elle était autrefois secrètement amoureuse, est devenue l'épouse de Dovid.

Les retrouvailles entre les deux femmes font renaître une passion qui ne s'est jamais vraiment éteinte...

Le scénario est écrit par Sebastián Lelio et Rebecca Lenkiewicz et il est basé sur le roman de Naomi Alderman. Les rôles principaux sont joués par Rachel Weisz, Rachel McAdams et Alessandro Nivola.



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CAST

Ronit Khruska	Rachel Weisz
Esti Kuperman	Rachel McAdams
Dovid Kuperman	Alessandro Nivola
Rav Krushka	Anton Lesser
Moshe Hartog	Allan Corduner
Rabbi Goldfarb	Nicholas Woodeson
Yosef Kirshbaum	David Fleeshman
Fruma Hartog	Bernice Stegers
Hinda	Clara Francis



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CREW

regie réalisation	Sebastián Lelio
scenario scénario	Sebastián Lelio
	Rebecca Lenkiewicz
naar de roman van d'après le roman de	Naomi Alderman
beeld image	Danny Cohen BSC
productieleiding directrice de production	Rachel Dargavel
montage	Nathan Nugent
muziek musique	Matthew Herbert
décors	Sarah Finlay
costumes	Odile Dicks-Mireaux
casting	Nina Gold
haar en make up coiffure et maquillage	Marese Langan
producenten produit par	Frida Torresblanco
	Ed Guiney
	Rachel Weisz
uitvoerend producenten producteurs exécutifs	Rose Garnett
	Daniel Battsek
	Ben Browning
	Glen Basner
	Andrew Lowe

Eric Laufer

Giovanna Randall

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LONG SYNOPSIS

In a Jewish Orthodox Synagogue in Hendon, the frail RAV KRUSHKA (Anton Lesser) collapses whilst giving a sermon. As funeral rites commence in London, the Rabbi's exiled daughter RONIT KHRUSKA (Rachel Weisz) is living her life as a photographer in Manhattan. During a photo shoot she is told by the Brooklyn Synagogue of her father's death; wounded by the news and in a vulnerable state, she gets drunk in a local bar and sleeps with an undetermined man.

Ronit flies home to London where she feels out of place in the Orthodox Jewish community she left behind. She is greeted at the home of DOVID KUPERMAN (Alessandro Nivola), a son figure to the Rav, who is taken aback by the unexpected return of his childhood friend. Her welcome inside the home is hostile from those in the community gathering in the Rav's honour. Her aunt FRUMA HARTOG (Bernice Stegers) greets her more openly, though the air is frosty between Ronit and her uncle MOSHE HARTOG (Allan Corduner). Ronit is both upset and angry that she was not informed of her father's illness and that her father's obituary claims he was childless.

Despite tension surrounding Ronit's sudden departure in the past, Dovid invites her to stay with him and his wife. Ronit is shocked to discover that he is married to their former best friend ESTI (Rachel McAdams), now a teacher at an Orthodox girls' school. It is uncomfortable between the two women; a complicated past is clearly hanging over them.

The next day Ronit visits her father's grave. After further prayers at their home, Dovid, Esti and Ronit go to a dinner at the Hartog house with RABBI GOLDFARB (Nicholas Woodeson) and REBBETZIN GOLDFARB (Liza Sadovy). Ronit tries to talk to her Uncle about selling her father's house, but he tells her now is not the right time for such a topic.

Conversation turns to Ronit's successful career as a photographer and Rebbetzin questions why she goes by Ronnie Curtis after seeing one of her photos in a magazine. Esti, quietly joining in the conversation, states that women change their names all the time when they get married and lose their own history. Everyone is silently shocked at Esti's controversial comment. Rebbetzin continues questioning Ronit's life in New York and asks why she is still not married, as it's the way it should be for a woman. Ronit disagrees, calling marriage an institutional obligation and if she had stayed in the community and been married off, she would have killed herself. Everyone is shocked by her outburst and Ronit, blaming her jet lag, excuses herself to go home. Dovid, upon Esti's request, leaves to walk her home. Ronit breaks down to Dovid, hoping her father knew she truly loved him. Dovid, struggling against the rules of his religion, tries to comfort his childhood friend without touching her.

Ronit visits her uncle Hartog at his wigmaker's shop to continue the discussion of selling her father's house, but is informed by Hartog that the Rav left the house and all its

contents to the Synagogue. She leaves and soon runs into Esti outside a supermarket. They visit the Rav's house together - a rundown mess full of medical equipment, it is not so much the house that Ronit wanted, but for her father to acknowledge her in his will. Esti admits that she does not want Ronit to leave again; past feelings are reignited and they kiss, at first timidly as Ronit pulls back, and then passionately. Ronit retreats once more, confused about her feelings.

They leave the house and Esti confesses that she had called the Brooklyn Synagogue to let Ronit know of her father's death. She tells Ronit that she married Dovid, a man she doesn't love romantically but respects, as she was mentally unwell following Ronit's sudden departure and married their best friend upon the Rav's suggestion. As they relax into each other's company and kiss again, they are interrupted by HINDA (Clara Francis) and husband LEV (Mark Stobbart) and are unsure how much they saw. Esti rushes home, tense; she almost embraces Dovid but their marriage still lacks the passion she has with Ronit.

At school, Esti is summoned to see the headmistress MRS SHAPIRO (Caroline Gruber) where Hinda and Lev are waiting to confront her. Allegations about Esti and Ronit also plague Dovid when he is asked by the Synagogue to take on the Rav's work.

Ronit waits for Esti at the school gates, where Esti tells her about the formal complaint Hinda and Lev have submitted against her. Upon Ronit's suggestion, they escape the close knit community and head into central London for the day. Ronit and Esti continue to be conflicted in their attraction to one other; Esti feels guilty and is trying to lead a good life in line with her faith, but cannot help but desire her former lover. They go to a hotel where they make love, completely at ease and euphoric in each other's company. They talk about how

Ronit's father first learnt of their relationship all those years ago.

Esti returns home late at night, where Dovid is waiting in their bedroom. He tries to get close to her but his yearning to be intimate with his wife is rebuked once again by a confused Esti.

Nauseous the next day, Esti begins to wonder if she is pregnant. Dovid confronts Esti about Mrs Shapiro's accusations and she admits what happened between them. Dovid's anger almost turns violent as he releases his frustration at his wife's inability to embrace their life together. Ronit, having overheard the argument, tries to persuade Esti to leave her husband, but Esti struggles to come to a decision. They both try to convince each other, and themselves, they are happy in their lives.

Unable to cope with the current events, Dovid seeks refuge in a quiet Synagogue library. The atmosphere is tense when he returns home for dinner with Ronit and Esti. When Ronit announces that she has booked a flight back to New York that night, Dovid seems relieved and quietly asked his wife what she plans on doing now. Ronit and Esti share a difficult goodbye, both unable to share their true feelings. Esti accuses Ronit of taking the easy option by leaving, Ronit storms out the house and Esti slams the door behind her; both heartbroken at the recent events.

In the middle of the night, Esti leaves the house whilst Dovid is asleep and returns to the hotel room with a pregnancy test. Waking up at the airport the next morning, Ronit receives a panicked phone call from Dovid saying Esti is missing. After trying to calm him down, she continues to check into her flight, but later decides to leave and help Dovid in the search for her.

Returning home after failing in their search for Esti, Ronit is still angry that Dovid didn't tell her of her father's illness. Esti returns from hiding and, having heard everything, announces her pregnancy. Dovid is joyous, believing a child will solve all their marital problems, but Esti instead asks for freedom for her and her child. She was born into the community and wants to give her child the freedom of choice she never had. Dovid is speechless and Esti feels guilty for crushing her husband's dreams of becoming a father.

Ronit and Esti attend the Hespel at the Synagogue, intimidated by the judgemental looks they receive. Esti tries to make peace with Dovid, but he ignores her. Moved by the temple's sacred atmosphere, Ronit asks Esti to be with her in New York. They clutch hands as Dovid takes to the podium, where he struggles to deliver the official speech on the Rav's passing. Seeing Ronit in the crowd, he instead contemplates

the notion of freedom and choice, a topic that the Rav spoke about in his final sermon, and grants Esti the autonomy she has requested. Dovid declines the Synagogue position and abruptly leaves the Hespel. Outside, overcome with emotion Esti and Dovid hug. Ronit watches on in the distance until Dovid extends an arm and the three friends have a long heartfelt hug together.

The next morning, Ronit prepares to leave for the airport. She bids a quiet farewell to Dovid outside his bedroom and goes to see Esti, who has slept on the sofa. They say goodbye; it seems Esti has decided against joining Ronit in New York. As Ronit's taxi pulls away down the street, Esti runs after her and the pair share a long goodbye kiss, promising to remain in contact. An emotional Ronit visits her father's grave one last time and takes a photo, achieving a sense of closure over his passing and the recent events.



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PRODUCTION STORY

Rachel Weisz and Frida Torresblanco were searching for material to produce together, when Rachel mentioned Naomi Alderman's 2006 award-winning novel 'Disobedience'. Frida read the novel over a weekend and by Monday knew that this was the story the producing partners were looking for.

'We established this creative relationship from the beginning where we were really curious to find roles for women, women who are intelligent, determined and decision makers and not just there to support the male character.' Frida elaborates.

'What really grabbed me about the novel was the theme of transgression in the modern world where there is almost nothing taboo anymore. The term disobedience means very little unless you find the right community to set it in, like the small Orthodox Jewish community in North London. If you find a story of transgression within an ordered old fashioned society, I think you have a great universal drama that anyone can relate to.' Weisz continues.

Film4, who joined the production in its early development stages, with Rose Garnett and Daniel Battsek acting as Executive Producers, introduced the film to Ed Guiney; reuniting Weisz and Guiney after their successful collaboration on Academy Award nominee *The Lobster*.

'What I really responded to most in the film was how utterly human these characters were with all their flaws and self-doubt; their forgiveness and their disobedience.' Guiney explains as to what attracted him to the project.

Torresblanco, after seeing Sebastián Lelio's film *Gloria*, thought he would be the perfect director for the project and pitched the idea to him, as she explains:

'He has this extraordinary sensibility and he connects with women profoundly - he understands the mechanics of every detail of the performance. I pitched him the work and he was immediately very happy and enthusiastic. He read the book right away and had the same sensation of the uniqueness of this story as me and he came on board.'

He's an amazing filmmaker and he creates a wonderful atmosphere on set - there's intensity and a focus, but a great humanity and quite a lot of levity on his set' Guiney continues

After completing a few drafts of the script, Lelio met with award-winning playwright, Rebecca Lenkiewicz to discuss continuing to work on the script together. Over the course of a year, they continued to research and write the script together, including spending a weekend in a Jewish hotel and a visit to the Orthodox community with author, Naomi Alderman, which Lenkiewicz described as the 'most interesting forensic study of the script'.

'From the beginning, we were very simpatico about where it should go. Alderman's book is full of conflict and we knew we had to keep up the temperature of Ronit feeling compelled to come home. We all have a fear of family, as well as a love, and we wanted to honour the complexity of love and loss in her book'.

Disobedience also sees the reunion of Guiney and Director of Photography, Danny Cohen (Academy Award winner for *The King's Speech*) after their collaboration on *Room*, for which Guiney received an Academy Award nomination for Best Motion Picture.

Guiney expands on their second partnership and the ease to which Cohen can work with actors:

'Danny Cohen has great instincts in allowing the actors to inhabit the frame. They really trust that he's capturing them in the very best way and there's some amazing camerawork in the film.'

For Lelio, they formed a great team on set, as he explains:

'This film was a great adventure for me as I didn't know anyone and Danny became a great partner. He was always

flexible and helpful in finding ways to beautifully capture the element of freedom for the actors'.

Disobedience, a drama of love and the fight for acceptance against the confines of the regimented Orthodox community in North London, has a universality that audiences will respond to as Lelio concludes:

'We're going through a war in which only certain relationships are considered legitimate and who draws the line where and with which authority. This is a story about characters that are willing to change and evolve, but to do so they have to go through very rigid structures and that confrontation resonates with what we're going through nowadays as a human society all over the world'.



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INTERVIEW || ENTRETIEN Sebastián Lelio

Sebastián Lelio is a Chilean filmmaker based in Berlin. His fourth film Gloria premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2013, where it became a critical and popular success. It won the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury and the Gilde award, and earned a Silver Bear for best actress Paulina García. The film was later nominated for an Independent Spirit Award and a London Critics Circle Award for Best Foreign Language Film, as well as being Chile's entry for the 2014 Academy Awards – and a long string of others. It currently holds a 99% rating on Rotten Tomatoes. Lelio's fifth feature film, A Fantastic Woman, premiered in main competition in Berlin 2017 to rave reviews across the board, and won the Silver Bear for best screenplay. It will play at Telluride, Toronto, and New York Film Festival, and will be released by Sony Pictures Classic in the US, Artificial Eye in the UK in 2018.

The English language remake of Gloria – now set in LA – and starring Julianne Moore as the titular character will go into production soon with Juan and Pablo Larrain to produce.

What attracted you to the material and why did you want to explore this story?

I immediately fell in love with the three main characters; it is a love story between all three of them and how their relationships evolve and their lives are affected by these days of grief.

As a Chilean director, how did you find working on the subject matter of Jewish Orthodox in North London?

The Jewish Orthodox background is of course very important but what's really going on in the film, in a certain way transcends that particular cultural specificity. The heart of the story is very universal.

How would you describe your process of working with actors?

I love actors and have a way of working with them where you're still able to see the person behind the character.

So what you see on the screen is the person interpreting the character, you see an actor giving an artistic battle in front of your eyes and I do believe that is where the greatest amount of cinematic pleasure comes from.

How would you describe the relationship between Ronit, Esti and Dovid?

Ronit is this modern, free spirited woman who has run away from her origins. Esti has stayed in the community but has run away from her true self. By letting Ronit know of her father's death, Esti not only allows Ronit the opportunity to reconnect with her origins, but also calls her own destiny; knowing this is her last chance to be set free. And there is this other important element of Dovid, the Rav's spiritual son and natural successor. The days of mourning allow all these passions and repressed feelings to come out and a new order is established.

And what did Rachel Weisz, Rachel McAdams and Alessandro Nivola bring to the trio of friends?

They are like a rock'n'roll band with three guitar players, and that brought the main source of energy to the film; they're defending their characters and that creates great cinematic tension.

What was it like to work with Rachel Weisz as a producer, as well as an actor?

One of the main reasons why I accepted the project was because Rachel Weisz was involved. I've always admired her and imagining her as Ronit with her rebellious soul was irresistible. We did write the script with her in mind to play Ronit, so all the things that I've always admired about her could have the opportunity to come out and shine, Ronit's personality created a lot of opportunities for complex emotions to emerge.

How did Rachel McAdams come to be involved and what did she bring to the character of Esti?

Rachel McAdams had inner nobility and brought a lot of dignity to the character. During the years, Esti has become a master in disguise, hiding behind wigs and manners. But deep inside she's a desperate woman trying to reconnect with who she is. Even though Esti is navigating through a lot of complex situations, there is something very stable about her that allowed the character to be strong and fragile at the same time. Rachel McAdams was capable of dealing with all these complexities with incredible artistry and grace.

Can you elaborate on the relationship between Ronit and Esti and what Rachel Weisz and McAdams brought to it?

I followed my intuition that the collision of Rachel Weisz and Rachel McAdams was going to be beautiful to see and generate great sparks. In a certain way, I saw Ronit and Esti as the same person divided in two. One escaped and became free, the other stayed and embraced the religion; but both paid a big price.

What do you hope the audiences will feel whilst watching Disobedience?

Disobedience is a very intense journey. The characters are going through a certain turmoil that defines the film and makes it oscillate between different tones. The story explores the whole emotional spectrum of Ronit, Esti and Dovid. They feel very real, very close. You feel like you are sitting at the dining tables and lying in those beds with the characters; Even though we might not know much about the very secretive world of London Jewish Orthodoxy, the film generates a very intimate, strangely familiar feeling.

Why do you think it's an important story to tell at this time?

Disobedience is a story about confused human beings interacting and trying to do the best they can against a background of fixed conceptions. This is a story about characters that are willing to change and evolve, but to do so they have to go through very rigid structures and that confrontation resonates with what we're going through nowadays as a human society all over the world, where the old paradigms seem to be either obsolete or insufficient. I always felt that there was certain urgency in bringing Disobedience to life.

Qu'est-ce qui vous a intéressé dans cette intrigue ? Pourquoi avez-vous eu envie de vous y atteler ?

Je suis immédiatement tombé amoureux des trois personnages principaux. C'est d'ailleurs une histoire d'amour entre ces trois-là et le film parle de l'évolution de leurs rapports et de l'impact de ces jours de deuil sur leur vie.

Vous qui êtes d'origine chilienne, vous n'avez pas eu d'appréhension en vous attachant à une communauté juive orthodoxe du nord de Londres ?

Le contexte juif orthodoxe est, bien entendu, très important, mais le vrai sujet du film transcende, d'une certaine façon, cette spécificité culturelle. Car les thématiques de cette histoire sont totalement universelles.

Comment dirigez-vous les acteurs ?

J'adore les acteurs et je leur demande de faire en sorte qu'on perçoive l'être humain au-delà du personnage. Du coup, à l'écran, on voit quelqu'un qui interprète un rôle - un acteur qui livre une bataille artistique, et je suis convaincu que c'est ce qui procure le plus de plaisir cinématographique.

Comment pourriez-vous qualifier les rapports entre Ronit, Esti et Dovid ?

Ronit est une femme moderne et insoumise qui a fui ses origines. Esti est demeurée au sein de sa communauté, mais elle a fui sa véritable identité. En informant Ronit de la mort de son père, Esti permet non seulement à Ronit de renouer avec ses origines, mais provoque aussi son destin, car elle est consciente qu'il s'agit de sa dernière chance de vivre enfin selon ses désirs. Et puis, il y a Dovid, fils spirituel et successeur naturel du Rav. Ces journées de deuil permettent à toutes ces

passions et à ces sentiments réprimés de s'exprimer, jusqu'à ce qu'un nouvel ordre prévale.

Comment Rachel Weisz, Rachel McAdams et Alessandro Nivola se sont-ils appropriés ces trois personnages ?

Ils m'ont fait penser à trois guitaristes d'un groupe de rock'n'roll, et c'est ce qui a insufflé toute l'énergie au film. Ils se battent pour leurs personnages, ce qui crée une formidable dynamique cinématographique.

Comment s'est passée votre collaboration avec Rachel Weisz, qui a la double casquette de productrice et de comédienne ?

Si j'ai accepté de participer à ce projet, c'est en grande partie parce que Rachel Weisz y était associée. Je l'admire depuis toujours, et c'était très séduisant de l'imaginer en Ronit avec son esprit rebelle. On a écrit le scénario en pensant à elle dans le rôle de Ronit, si bien que toutes les qualités que j'admire chez elle depuis longtemps pouvaient se manifester librement. Il faut dire que grâce à la personnalité de Ronit, les sentiments les plus complexes peuvent s'exprimer.

Comment Rachel McAdams est-elle arrivée sur le projet ?

Rachel McAdams possède une vraie noblesse et a insufflé une grande dignité à son personnage. Au fil des années, Esti est passée maître dans l'art de la dissimulation, en se réfugiant derrière ses perruques et son comportement. Mais en son for intérieur, c'est une femme désespérée qui tente de renouer avec sa véritable identité. Même si Esti traverse plusieurs situations difficiles, il y a chez elle un ancrage qui lui permet d'être forte et vulnérable à la fois. Rachel McAdams a su canaliser toute cette complexité avec un talent et une élégance inouïs.

Pouvez-vous me parler des rapports entre Ronit et Esti et de la manière dont Rachel Weisz et Rachel McAdams les ont nourris ?

J'ai suivi mon intuition qui consistait à penser que la rencontre entre Rachel Weisz et Rachel McAdams allait être magnifique et donner lieu à des moments de grâce. D'une certaine façon, Ronit et Esti sont, à mes yeux, les deux facettes de la même personne. L'une a réussi à s'enfuir et à accéder à la liberté, tandis que l'autre est restée sur place et a accepté les dogmes de la religion. Mais les deux en ont payé le prix fort.

Pourquoi, à votre avis, s'agit-il d'une histoire qu'il était important de raconter aujourd'hui ?

DÉSOBÉISSANCE parle des rapports entre des êtres humains déboussolés qui tentent de faire de leur mieux, malgré un environnement pétri de dogmes. Les personnages sont prêts à évoluer et à changer, mais pour y parvenir, ils doivent affronter des institutions très rigides : cet affrontement fait écho à ce que toutes les sociétés humaines vivent à l'heure actuelle, partout dans le monde, où les vieux modèles semblent obsolètes ou insuffisants. J'ai toujours eu le sentiment qu'il y avait une certaine urgence à porter ce projet à l'écran.



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INTERVIEW || ENTRETIEN Rachel Weisz

Academy Award-winning actress Rachel Weisz, who is known for portraying women of incredible spirit and intelligence, continues to seek out challenging projects and roles both on screen and stage.

Receiving unanimous critical praise opposite Ralph Fiennes, in 2005 Weisz earned a Screen Actors Guild Award, Golden Globe Award and the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance in Fernando Meirelles' film adaptation of the best-selling John le Carré novel, *The Constant Gardener*. Similarly, in 2012 she received a Golden Globe nomination for Best Actress in a Motion Picture Drama for her highly acclaimed performance in Terence Davies' *The Deep Blue Sea*, a film adaptation of Terence Rattigan's play. Her performance in this independent film also earned her Best Actress awards from The New York Film Critics Circle, and the Toronto Film Critics Association.

Weisz's diverse work includes *My Cousin Rachel*, directed by Roger Michell, Mick Jackson's *Denial*, *Complete Unknown*, directed by Joshua Marston, Derek Cianfrance's *The Light Between the Oceans*, Paolo Sorrentino's *Youth*, Yorgos Lanthimos's 2015 Cannes Jury Prize winner *The Lobster*, Alejandro Amenabar's ancient Egyptian epic *Agora*, Rian Johnson's international con man adventure *The Brothers Bloom*, Wong Kar Wei's *My Blueberry Nights*, Peter Jackson's *The Lovely Bones*, Adam Brooks' romantic comedy *Definitely Maybe*, and the indie political drama *The Whistleblower*, directed by Larysa Kondracki. Weisz also starred in Jim Sheridan's thriller *Dream House* opposite Daniel Craig, Francis Lawrence's hit thriller *Constantine*, Darren Aronofsky's sci-fi/romantic fantasy adventure *The Fountain* opposite Hugh Jackman, Gary Fleder's *Runaway Jury*, Chris and Paul Weitz's *About a Boy*, Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Enemy at the Gates* and Bernardo Bertolucci's *Stealing Beauty*. Weisz has also appeared in a number of blockbuster films including Stephen Sommers' *The Mummy* and *The Mummy Returns*, Tony Gilroy's *The Bourne Legacy*, opposite Jeremy Renner and Sam Raimi's *Oz: The Great and Powerful*. Weisz received critical acclaim for Focus Features *The Shape of Things*, which also marked her first venture into producing. She executive produced *The Radiator*, the directorial debut of Tom Browne.

In the Fall of 2016, Weisz starred in the off-Broadway production of The Public Theater's *Plenty*. David Leveaux directed Weisz in the lead role of the drama which is set in the years following World War II. In 2013, Weisz starred on Broadway in Mike Nichols' *Betrayal* opposite Daniel Craig and Rafe Spall. Before its opening, *Betrayal* shattered weekly box office records in previews at The Barrymore Theater. In 2010, Weisz won the Laurence Olivier Award in the category of Best Actress for her performance as Blanche DuBois in the West End revival of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*. She had previously starred in writer/director Neil LaBute's staging of his original play *The Shape of Things*, in both London and New York City. Her performance in Sean Mathias' U.K. staging of Noel Coward's *Design for Living* earned her the London Drama Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Newcomer. She also starred in the West End production of *Suddenly Last Summer*, directed by Mathias.

Weisz began her career as a student at Cambridge University where she formed the Talking Tongues Theatre Group, which performed numerous experimental pieces and won the prestigious Guardian Award at the Edinburgh Festival..

What attracted you to this project?

I was looking for material to develop, as well as produce and act in. Disobedience was one of the first projects I found; it's an incredible story, with two great female leads. What really grabbed me about the novel was the theme of transgression in the modern world where there is almost nothing taboo anymore. The term disobedience means very little unless you find the right community to set it in, like the small Orthodox Jewish community in North London. If you find a story of transgression within an ordered old fashioned society, I think you have a great universal drama that anyone can relate to.

What was it like to develop the book into a film?

It took about three years from when I optioned the book, to when we started filming. I found the process of working with Sebastián, who joined the project six months later, really exciting. It was an incredible journey transforming and mutating the book into its own entity through long discussions and script meetings.

What was it like to work with Sebastián Lelio?

I've seen his work, particularly Gloria. He was the first person who was offered the book to develop and he said yes immediately. I was stunned because he's a filmmaker coming from such a different cultural background, so he had to really investigate this society and religion like a cultural anthropologist. As an outsider, the way in which he saw the world was very different from had it been a British director. So it's great that he had to immerse himself in the society

from a really different point of view. I love the fact that he doesn't really have antagonists in his film.

For instance, Uncle Hartog in the book is a much nastier piece of work, but in the script he's just someone who doesn't agree with my character. Everyone contains within them their own antagonist and worst enemy and that's what interests him.

What was Ronit's relationship like with her father?

Ronit is living with her guilt that she has erased her father from her own life after he disowned her. When she left, she chose not get in contact with him. There is this regret of being too late to forgive each other. To find forgiveness and peace with a parent before they die is incredibly important to carry on with your life. A part of her story is about how you can leave where you're from, but you can't really leave it behind; you carry it with you wherever you go. You think you are free living your life, but you need to find closure on certain things. For Ronit not to be contacted about her father's illness, she's denied closure to come and say goodbye which is very painful.

What is Ronit's relationship with Judaism?

I see Ronit as a teenager who questioned the religious laws; her free liberal thinking is immensely dangerous to the tiny closed community. Why should women get married and wear a wig? Why can't she drive on a Saturday? There are so many rules and laws and Ronit questioned them hard and was seen as a rebel and anti-authoritarian as a result.

Can you tell us about the character of Esti and working with Rachel McAdams?

Rachel McAdams is a great actress and has a huge range. She read the script and it really spoke to her. Esti is a gay woman who is in a loving heterosexual marriage. In her religion, homosexuality is considered a sin, but she believes in god so she's trying to do the right thing by her marriage. She is in a lot of psychological pain because of this decision and Ronit's return releases all her desire to be free. At the same time, she doesn't view her life as a prison because she loves Dovid as a dear friend. It's a really complicated role and I think Rachel brings a sense of Esti's inner torture and suffering and then transforms into someone who finds freedom.

Can you tell us about the character Dovid and working with Alessandro Nivola?

Dovid is an innately conservative and spiritual man, who was Ronit's father's favourite student. Growing up, Ronit was jealous of their relationship because they could sit around talking about Judaism for hours, which didn't appeal to Ronit. So there's always been a bit of sibling rivalry between the two of them, but Dovid is a decent, morally good man. Even though the community is warning him about the trouble Ronit could bring, he knows she is mourning her father and should be involved. When his decency is tested in a very serious way, he discovers an existential spirituality outside any given doctrine, and Alessandro has really tapped into that and the sense of righteousness that you need play a Rabbi.

What was it like to work with cinematographer Danny Cohen?

Danny Cohen shot Room in one incredibly private space, so he's very skilled at creating drama in very small confined spaces.

He's an incredible visual story teller and the story felt really important to him. He grew up in the same street as me in North London so we had endless conversations about the same tree we climbed as kids.

Qu'est-ce qui vous a intéressée dans ce projet ?

Je cherchais des projets à développer et à produire dans lesquels je pouvais aussi jouer. DÉSOBÉISSANCE est l'un des premiers que j'ai trouvés. Il s'agit d'une histoire hors du commun portée par deux personnages féminins extraordinaires. Ce qui m'a vraiment captivée dans le roman, c'est le thème de la transgression transposé dans un monde contemporain où il n'existe presque plus aucun tabou. Le terme de « désobéissance » n'a guère de sens aujourd'hui, à moins de situer l'intrigue dans une communauté comme celle des Juifs orthodoxes du nord de Londres. Si on tombe sur une histoire de transgression se déroulant dans une société très rigide et ultraconservatrice, je pense qu'on peut obtenir à l'arrivée un formidable drame universel dans lequel chacun d'entre nous peut se reconnaître.

Comment s'est déroulée l'adaptation du roman en film ?

Il se sera écoulé environ trois ans entre le moment où j'ai pris une option sur le livre et le début du tournage. J'ai trouvé la collaboration avec Sebastián, qui est arrivé sur le projet six mois plus tard, très exaltante. La transformation du livre en une œuvre distincte, à travers de longues discussions et des réunions d'écriture, m'a semblé être une expérience galvanisante.

Parlez-moi de vos rapports avec Sebastián Lelio.

J'ai vu ses films, et notamment GLORIA. Il est le premier à qui on ait proposé le projet et il nous a dit oui immédiatement. J'ai été assez stupéfaite car il vient d'un milieu culturel très éloigné de celui du film, et il a donc dû se documenter sur cette société et cette religion comme un anthropologue. En tant qu'étranger, il avait un point de vue sur cet univers très différent de celui qu'aurait eu un réalisateur anglais. C'était formidable de le voir se plonger dans ce monde-là en y portant un regard singulier. Ce qui m'a également plu, c'est qu'il n'y ait pas vraiment d'antagonistes dans ce film.

Par exemple, Oncle Hartog est un type beaucoup plus détestable dans le livre, mais dans le scénario, c'est simplement un personnage qui est en désaccord avec Ronit. Chacun des personnages est son propre pire ennemi, et c'est ce qui a séduit Sebastián.

Ronit s'entendait-elle bien avec son père ?

Ronit doit assumer un sentiment de culpabilité car elle l'a éliminé de sa vie après qu'il l'a reniée. En partant, elle a décidé de couper les ponts avec lui. Elle sent qu'il est sans doute trop tard pour se pardonner mutuellement. Arriver à pardonner son père ou sa mère et à établir avec lui ou avec elle des relations apaisées avant sa disparition est d'une importance capitale pour continuer à vivre. Le film raconte notamment que même si on quitte son milieu d'origine, on ne peut pas vraiment s'en défaire : on l'emporte avec soi, quel que soit l'endroit où on s'installe. On pense qu'on est libre de vivre sa vie, mais on a besoin de trouver des réponses à certaines questions pour pouvoir tourner la page. Le fait qu'on n'ait pas tenu Ronit au courant de la maladie de son père revient à l'empêcher de venir à son chevet lui dire au revoir – et d'aller de l'avant. C'est très douloureux pour elle.

Quelle relation Ronit entretient-elle avec le judaïsme ?

À mes yeux, Ronit est comme une adolescente qui a remis en question les dogmes de la religion. Son esprit frondeur représente une terrible menace pour la petite communauté repliée sur elle-même. Pourquoi les femmes devraient-elles se marier et porter une perruque ? Pourquoi n'a-t-elle pas le droit de conduire le samedi ? Il existe énormément de règles et de dogmes, que Ronit a sévèrement remis en cause, et c'est pour cela qu'elle est considérée comme une rebelle réfractaire à l'autorité.

Parlez-moi du personnage d'Esti et de votre collaboration avec Rachel McAdams.

Rachel McAdams est une formidable comédienne qui a une palette de jeu très large. Elle a lu le scénario qui l'a beaucoup touchée. Esti est une lesbienne qui a épousé un homme qu'elle estime. Dans sa religion, l'homosexualité est considérée comme un péché, mais elle croit en Dieu, si bien qu'elle a essayé de se racheter en se mariant. Sa décision l'a faite souffrir psychologiquement et le retour de Ronit la pousse à vivre selon ses désirs. Dans le même temps, elle n'a pas le sentiment d'être emprisonnée parce qu'elle éprouve une amitié profonde pour Dovid. C'est un rôle d'une grande complexité et je trouve que Rachel exprime très bien le déchirement et la souffrance qu'éprouve Esti, puis campe magistralement cette femme qui trouve enfin la liberté.

Comment pourriez-vous dépeindre le personnage de Dovid ? Comment s'est passée votre collaboration avec Alessandro Nivola ?

Dovid est un homme profondément conservateur et pieux, qui était l'élève préféré de son père. En grandissant, Ronit est devenue jalouse de leur relation car ils pouvaient parler du judaïsme pendant des heures, ce qui n'intéressait pas Ronit.

Il y a donc toujours eu une forme de rivalité fraternelle entre eux, mais Dovid est un homme honnête qui a de vraies valeurs morales. Alors même que la communauté le met en garde contre le chaos que Ronit est susceptible de provoquer, il sait qu'elle souffre de la mort de son père et qu'elle doit être associée au deuil. Lorsque son intégrité est gravement mise à l'épreuve, il découvre une forme de spiritualité existentielle extérieure à toute doctrine : Alessandro a vraiment exploré ces sentiments-là et la rectitude morale qu'il convient d'avoir pour camper un rabbin.

Parlez-nous du chef-opérateur Danny Cohen.

Danny Cohen a signé la photo de ROOM, tourné dans un seul espace clos, si bien qu'il sait parfaitement inscrire un drame dans des lieux confinés et exigus. Il possède un formidable sens visuel de la narration et il a été très touché par l'histoire. Il a grandi dans la même rue du nord de Londres que moi, et on avait donc beaucoup de souvenirs communs de l'époque où nous étions gamins.



DISOBEDIENCE || DÉSOBÉISSANCE

INTERVIEW || ENTRETIEN Rachel McAdams

Academy Award nominated Rachel McAdams' transformative performances have established her as one of Hollywood's most sought-after and respected actors. McAdams starred in Thomas McCarthy's critically acclaimed *Spotlight*, alongside Michael Keaton and Mark Ruffalo. The film tells the true story of how the Boston Globe uncovered the massive scandal of child molestation and cover-up within the local Catholic Archdiocese. *Spotlight* received numerous accolades including three Golden Globe Award nominations, five Independent Spirit Awards nominations, seven Critics' Choice Award nominations, two Screen Actors' Guild Award nominations and five Academy Award nominations. *Spotlight* received the 2016 Critics' Choice Award for Best Original Screenplay, Best Picture and Best Acting Ensemble, the 2016 Screen Actors' Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture and the 2016 Academy Award for Best Writing, Original Screenplay and Best Motion Picture. Individually, McAdams was nominated in the category of Best Supporting Actress in a Motion Picture at the Critics' Choice Awards, Screen Actors' Guild Awards and the Academy Awards.

Previous film credits include Woody Allen's *Midnight In Paris* which earned McAdams a SAG nomination for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture alongside cast mates Owen Wilson, Kathy Bates, Adrien Brody, Marion Cotillard, Carla Bruni, and Michael Sheen, she reprised her role as Irene Adler in *Sherlock Homes: A Game of Shadows* opposite Robert Downey Jr., starred in *The Little Prince* opposite Jeff Bridges, Paul Rudd, and Benicio del Toro, Anton Corbijn's *A Most Wanted Man* opposite Philip Seymour Hoffman, Robin Wright and Willem Dafoe, Cameron Crowe's *Aloha* opposite Bradley Cooper and Emma Stone, *Southpaw* opposite Jake Gyllenhaal and Forest Whitaker, Wim Wenders' *Everything Will Be Fine* opposite James Franco, Charlotte Gainsbourg and Robert Naylor, Michael Sucsy's *The Vow*, opposite Channing Tatum, Richard Curtis' *About Time* opposite Domhnall Gleeson and Bill Nighy, Terence Malick's *To The Wonder* opposite Ben Affleck, Olga Kurylenko, Brian De Palma's *Passion* opposite Noomi Rapace, Roger Michell's *Morning Glory* opposite Diane Keaton and Harrison Ford, Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*, *The Time Traveller's Wife*, Neil Burger's *The Lucky Ones*, *Married Life* (Toronto Film Festival 2007 Premiere), *The Family Stone* opposite Diane Keaton and Sarah Jessica Parker, Wes Craven's *Red Eye* opposite Cillian Murphy, *Wedding Crashers* opposite Owen Wilson, Vince Vaughn and Christopher Walken, Nick Cassavetes' *The Notebook* opposite Ryan Gosling and *Mean Girls*.

On television, McAdams was last seen in the second season of Nic Pizzolatto's *True Detective*. McAdams played Sheriff Ani Bezzirades, a Ventura County Sheriff's detective whose uncompromising ethics put her at odds with others and the system she serves. She starred alongside Colin Farrell, Taylor Kitsch, and Vince Vaughn. The series premiered on June 21, 2015 on HBO. McAdams was nominated for a 2016 Critics' Choice Award in the category of Best Actress in a Movie Made for Television or Limited Series.

In 2005, McAdams received ShoWest's Supporting Actress of the Year Award as well as the Breakthrough Actress of the Year at the Hollywood Film Awards. In 2009, she was awarded with ShoWest's Female Star of the Year.

McAdams was born and raised in a small town outside of London, Ontario. Involved with theatre growing up, she went on to graduate with honours with a BFA degree in Theatre from York University.

What attracted you to the project when you first read the script?

I fell in love with the script when I read it. It was beautifully written and unique, and the opportunity to work with Rachel Weisz was hard to turn down. I loved how sparse and yet complicated the story was. There were so many layers yet it was really respectful of the audience's intelligence and didn't force information on them. It's very rare to have a film with three leads where each has their own unique story arc from one another and together they make a really beautiful family.

Did you refer to the book whilst preparing for the role?

Naomi Alderman wrote such rich people that I constantly found myself returning to the book and mining for poetic bits which could bring so much life to a scene. I actually hosted it with my book club around the time of Rosh Hashanah so it was my opportunity to go to all the Kosher supermarkets, it was a great education on being a good Jewish housewife!

How did you research this role?

Orthodox Judaism was a society which was so foreign to me to begin with and I've since come to admire and really respect it. I spent some time in the Los Angeles Orthodox Community going to Shabaz dinners and Kosher supermarkets; it's quite easy to go and people watch. But it was the help of some really extraordinary advisors who invited us into their homes for dinners and the generosity of the community that gave us

such insight into what the world is really like. You feel the responsibility to portray things correctly, but I took some comfort in the fact that every Jewish Orthodox family follow the rules in their own style. Esti and Dovid are a fairly modern couple, there are some progressive elements to their relationship that don't belong to the Orthodox in the fact that they operate on a more equal level.

Can you give us a bit of background on Esti and her relationship with her husband?

Dovid and Esti have a loving relationship built on deep friendship and full of respect. When Ronit left so suddenly, Esti was destroyed and Dovid was there to pick her up, so she's very grateful to him for saving her life in some ways, but she might still be with him out of certain obligation and gratitude. She is living a life she thinks is good enough by ignoring her sexuality and making the choice to be with Dovid. Esti is a real believer in Judaism and being a good Jewish wife and member of the community, it's a belief that lives deep inside her. So to have her sexuality deemed not acceptable in her community creates an inner struggle for her. How can she still honour the life she loves and the people she loves? For the most part, she believes she is happy but doesn't realise she's cut off this major part of herself.

What was it like to work with Alessandro Nivola?

Alessandro was a great scene partner and has crafted a really beautiful Dovid; he always brings such humanity to his roles. It was really important to him that Dovid was a good guy who is struggling with his beliefs and the contradictions of this world and he really brought such truth to that struggle.

What was it like to work with Rachel as both a producer of the film and an acting partner?

Rachel has been such a champion for this film to get made and you can see the great love for the material in her performance. She wanted to find a story where there were strong parts for women. I'm grateful to her for that being a mission statement. On top of that she's an extraordinary actress who brought such compassion and confusion to Ronit. She expresses love so well by doing so little and can play free thinking rebellious women brilliantly and had a really beautiful interpretation of her character.

What was it like working with Sebastián Lelio?

Sebastián is wonderful; he is so meticulous when it comes to the details. He choreographed the scenes to the point that Rachel and I sometimes felt we were performing a dance. But he also knows how much can be said with a look and he would let the scene run organically as well. He was the best of both worlds; he could see when the director's touch needed to come in and when it was better to let it just fly. He's got that Latin rebellion in him that Ronit has that he could relate to and yet he's also got the quiet observant inner strength like Esti.

What is it like for Esti when Ronit returns to the community?

It's difficult for Esti to have Ronit return and not be able to openly comfort her, she is very self conscious about how she acts and respectful of Dovid as they are the pillars of the community. She also feels the real sting that she left, not just her but Dovid as well. They were a great group of friends that only had each other and when Ronit left, it was a real betrayal to both of them. But somewhere deep inside, Esti knew that things needed to change, which is why she gets the message to Ronit that her father has passed; her return is the catalyst for Esti to reevaluate her choices.

What was it like to film the scenes where Esti can truly be herself with Ronit?

The scenes in the hotel with Ronit were great to film because they were the only ones where Esti can truly let go. Sebastián expanded on the curiosity around what their life might have been outside the Orthodox community, by directing us to look at each other and wonder what could have been. So he's very in tune with the idea of regret and how damaging the intervention was that kept them apart.

What do you hope audiences will take away from watching this film?

The film explores the theme of personal freedom and what it means to follow your own path, so it is a story that has an incredible amount of hope in it. It's a great love story, but not just of one kind of love; love for god, love for friendship and romantic love. I have never seen a story that offers a glimpse into this world that goes this deep and looks into sexuality in this way. It's a story that needs to be told.

Qu'est-ce qui vous a intéressée dans ce projet quand vous avez découvert le scénario ?

Je suis vraiment tombée amoureuse du script en le lisant. L'écriture était magnifique et singulière, et je ne pouvais tout simplement pas laisser passer la perspective de tourner avec Rachel Weisz. Ce qui m'a plu, c'est la force de cette histoire, à la fois épurée et complexe. Elle comporte plusieurs niveaux de lecture, tout en respectant l'intelligence du spectateur, mais sans le bombarder d'informations. C'est très rare que dans un film mettant en scène trois protagonistes, chacun ait sa propre trajectoire et que les trois forment une très belle famille quand ils sont réunis.

Avez-vous eu besoin de relire certains passages du livre pour vous préparer au rôle ?

Naomi Alderman a imaginé des personnages d'une telle richesse que je revenais systématiquement au livre et que j'étais en quête des passages poétiques pour nourrir mon interprétation. En réalité, je l'ai fait découvrir à mon club de lecture au moment de Rosh Hashana, et c'était donc l'occasion de me rendre dans tous les supermarchés chacher. Du coup, c'était une formidable manière de m'initier à ce que doit être une bonne épouse juive !

Comment vous êtes-vous documentée ?

Au départ, j'étais à des années-lumière du judaïsme orthodoxe et, depuis, c'est un courant que j'admire et respecte. J'ai fréquenté la communauté orthodoxe de Los Angeles, en participant à des repas de shabbat et en me rendant à des supermarchés chacher. C'est assez facile à faire. Mais c'est surtout grâce à l'aide de quelques conseillers, vraiment extraordinaires, qui nous ont invités chez eux à dîner et à la générosité de la communauté que j'ai pu mieux comprendre cet univers.

On sent qu'on a la responsabilité de camper ces personnages avec justesse, mais ce qui m'a soulagée, c'est que chaque famille juive orthodoxe obéit aux dogmes de sa propre manière. Esti et Dovid forment un couple assez moderne : à certains égards, ils sont plutôt progressistes dans la mesure où ils se considèrent à égalité, ce qui n'a rien d'orthodoxe !

Pourriez-vous dépeindre le parcours d'Esti et sa relation avec son mari ?

Dovid et Esti ont beaucoup d'affection l'un pour l'autre, mais c'est une relation d'amitié et de respect qui les lie l'un à l'autre. Quand Ronit est partie du jour au lendemain, Esti s'est sentie dévastée et Dovid était là pour prendre soin d'elle. Du coup, elle éprouve une immense gratitude à son égard car elle sait qu'il lui a sauvé la vie, même si elle est peut-être en couple avec lui par obligation et par devoir. Elle pense qu'elle peut se contenter de traverser sa vie en niant sa sexualité et en choisissant d'épouser Dovid. Esti a foi dans le judaïsme et elle est convaincue qu'elle se doit d'être une bonne épouse et de respecter sa communauté. Du coup, elle est déchirée intérieurement lorsque sa sexualité est jugée inacceptable par les membres de sa communauté. Comment peut-elle continuer de respecter ces gens qu'elle aime ? Comment peut-elle encore mener cette vie ? Elle se croit heureuse mais elle n'a pas conscience qu'elle a refoulé une part importante de son identité.

Parlez-moi de votre collaboration avec Alessandro Nivola.

Alessandro est un formidable partenaire et a magnifiquement campé Dovid. Il insuffle beaucoup d'humanité à ses rôles. Il était important à ses yeux que Dovid soit un homme bien qui se débat avec ses convictions et les contradictions du monde où il vit - et il a su donner une grande authenticité à ses conflits intérieurs.

Rachel Weisz est à la fois productrice du film et votre partenaire. Que pensez-vous de ce double rôle ?

Rachel a vraiment porté ce film à bout de bras pour qu'il se concrétise et en la voyant jouer, on comprend à quel point ce projet lui tenait à cœur. Elle voulait trouver un scénario qui offre des personnages forts à des femmes. Je lui suis reconnaissante d'en avoir fait une question de principe. Par ailleurs, c'est une formidable actrice qui fait de Ronit une femme déboussolée pour qui on éprouve de l'empathie. Elle sait exprimer l'amour en étant dans la retenue et elle joue à merveille les femmes rebelles à l'esprit frondeur. Elle a livré une interprétation magnifique du personnage.

Parlez-nous de votre rencontre avec Sebastián Lelio.

Sebastián est merveilleux. Il est extrêmement attentif aux moindres détails. Comme un chorégraphe, il règle les scènes avec une telle précision qu'avec Rachel, on avait parfois l'impression de participer à un ballet. Mais il connaît aussi la force et l'éloquence d'un regard et il laisse parfois les scènes se dérouler naturellement, sans intervenir. Il maîtrise à la perfection ces deux approches : il savait exactement à quel moment, en tant que metteur en scène, il devait intervenir et quand il était préférable de rester en retrait pour laisser libre cours à ses acteurs. Il y a en lui cette part de révolte proprement latine que partage Ronit, et à laquelle il pouvait s'identifier, et il possède aussi cette force tranquille et cette qualité d'observation propres à Esti.

Comment Esti vit-elle le retour de Ronit dans la communauté?

C'est difficile pour elle de la voir revenir et de ne pas pouvoir la reconforter librement. Elle est très mal à l'aise et elle a beaucoup d'estime pour Dovid – et elle sait qu'ils représentent les piliers de la communauté. Elle est encore blessée par le départ de Ronit, qui a aussi fait du mal à Dovid.

Ils formaient une bande d'amis très soudés, qui pouvaient compter les uns sur les autres, et quand Ronit est partie, Esti et Dovid l'ont vécu comme une véritable trahison. Mais au fond d'elle-même, Esti était consciente que les choses devaient changer, et c'est pour cela qu'elle informe Ronit que son père est décédé. Son retour oblige Esti à porter un regard neuf sur les choix qu'elle a faits.

Comment s'est passé le tournage des séquences où Esti peut être enfin elle-même avec Ronit ?

Ces scènes dans l'hôtel avec Ronit étaient formidables parce que ce sont les seules où Esti peut vraiment lâcher prise. Sebastián avait envie de savoir ce qu'elles auraient pu vivre en dehors de la communauté orthodoxe, et nous a demandé d'imaginer quel aurait pu être leur parcours. Il ressentait donc lui-même le regret qu'elles éprouvent et à quel point l'intervention de la communauté dans leur relation et sa responsabilité dans leur séparation les a brisées.

DISOBEDIENCE || DÉSOBÉISSANCE

INTERVIEW || ENTRETIEN Alessandro Nivola

Actor and producer Alessandro Nivola won the the 2017 TriBeCa Film Festival's Best Actor Award for his performance opposite Juno Temple in the upcoming One Percent More Humid. He also won a Screen Actors Guild Award and a Critics Choice Award for best cast for his performance as Anthony Amado in David O. Russell's American Hustle, and he earned an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor for his performance as the English rock musician Ian McKnight opposite Frances McDormand in Lisa Cholodenko's Laurel Canyon.

In 2015 Nivola was nominated for a Tony Award™ and an Outer Critics Circle Award for his performance as Frederick Treves opposite Bradley Cooper in the Broadway revival of The Elephant Man.

Nivola is currently filming Gideon Raff's The Red Sea Diving Resort, starring opposite Chris Evans. He was most recently seen in the HBO film The Wizard Of Lies, playing Mark Madoff opposite Robert DeNiro. Upcoming work includes three features: Weightless, One Percent More Humid, and Lynne Ramsay's You Were Never Really Here with Joaquin Phoenix which won best screenplay at this year's Cannes Film Festival. He also stars with his wife Emily Mortimer in the groundbreaking live action narrative VR short Broken Night which also screened at Cannes.

In addition to three award nominated performances on Broadway, Nivola has starred in many films including Junebug, Coco Before Chanel, A Most Violent Year, Selma (Critics Choice Award nomination best cast), The Neon Demon, Mansfield Park, Ginger & Rosa, Kenneth Branagh's Love's Labour's Lost, Jurassic Park 3, and John Woo's Face/Off among others.

Nivola and Emily Mortimer set up the film and television production company King Bee Productions in 2014. He produced two seasons of HBO's Doll & Em and is producing two new as yet untitled series for Amazon and TruTV respectively. He is also producing the feature film To Dust starring Geza Rohrig (Son of Saul) and Matthew Broderick which is currently in post production.

Alessandro grew up in rural Vermont and graduated from Yale University with a BA in English. He resides in New York.



What attracted you to the script when you first read it?

What attracted me to the script was the trio of friends that all mean well and yet somehow create a messy situation despite their affection for each other. It's a totally human situation that is unavoidable and painful.

What was your initial reaction to reading the script?

I loved Sebastián's Gloria so I already knew how talented he was and became immediately curious to know more about his work. When I read the outline of the script, I thought Dovid would be a secondary character supporting the heart of the story, so I was surprised when he had more capacity and his story was integral to the over arching narrative. The script presented a problem that pits belief and religion against modernity and changing times and questions how to reconcile those two things. Dovid represented someone who had committed his life to his religion in a very intense and profound way, and has to reconcile those beliefs against his sense of goodness and his love for the people he is closest too. It really explored that dilemma for him in a detailed, complex and beautiful way.

Did you use Naomi Alderman's book to further enhance your understanding of the character?

The descriptions of Dovid in the book and script varied quite a lot so my first instinct was to concentrate solely on the script as something that existed all on its own. But as I started to research the character, I felt this pull back to the book to get more details about the particular community.

When I went back and started reading the book more closely, I realised that Dovid wasn't too different from how he had been rendered in the book and it became a really valuable resource for me.

How much research did you undertake for the role?

The first thing I discovered when I started the research was that within the Orthodox community, there are a million shades of grey in terms of how people observe their religion. So the first challenge was to work out where this particular community was on that spectrum. The research I undertook was the most interesting that I've ever had as an actor, both intellectually and on a personal level. I met so many people that took me into their community. The friends that I've made at Shabaz dinners are friends for life. I have felt a responsibility throughout the making of the film to get across the incredible warmth of the Orthodox community. These are people who are full of passion and affection for each other. Sometimes the Orthodox is perceived like a hostile community, ruthless in its judgement of the outside world, but that hasn't been my experience.

Can you elaborate on Dovid's close relationship to Ronit's father?

At a young age, he saw a quality and a connection with god in Dovid which could help bind the community together in a way that he had, so he became his pupil. Dovid's adolescence would have been spent with this man, which is how he came to be so close to Ronit and her best friend Esti, who he might not have known otherwise because young men and women are kept quite separate in the Orthodox world.

After Ronit left, he became adopted by him as his only child so the situation is difficult for everyone. The man was essentially his father. His death at the beginning of the script really sparks of this confusing situation where she comes back to mourn him and I'm there mourning him like a father.

Can you describe the relationship between Dovid and Esti?

I love the way that Dovid and Esti's relationship is written because it's a good marriage and they have a deep respect for one another. What is wrong with their marriage is so subtle and yet essential; she is a lesbian. There is every reason why Dovid and Esti could have gone all those years thinking their marriage was worth preserving, yet in the end she has to be who she is and love the way she is naturally inclined to love.

What did Rachel McAdams bring to the role of Esti?

The character that I've watched her create has been a person who is incredibly shy, quiet seemingly meek, but with this burning furnace inside her. Esti is someone who is full of passion, but not accustomed to expressing herself that way and Rachel instantly understood that fundamental part of her character.

What was it like to work with Rachel Weisz?

Rachel and I have a long history together; my first film in the UK was co-starring with her in 1998. It was wonderful to work together again after all those years. Rachel has a rebellious soul, so I could see why she responded to the book and designed this role for herself. She's fearless and has a little bit of mischief in her eye.

What did you enjoy most about working with Sebastián?

I've felt completely free even within the boundaries of what my character's behaviour would be. From the first moment we met and talked about the way that he wanted to work, it became clear that performance was really the most important element.

What do you hope audiences will take away from watching the film?

Life is always presenting you with situations that aren't easily resolved. So ideally people will walk away without easy answers; the best stories are the ones that aren't packed. Hopefully people will walk away having had their opinions and preconceptions about certain life challenged.

Qu'est-ce qui vous a intéressé dans le scénario quand vous l'avez découvert ?

C'est ce trio d'amis animés des meilleures intentions qui, malgré tout, se retrouvent dans une situation épouvantable en dépit de l'affection qui les lie les uns aux autres. C'est une situation profondément humaine, à la fois inévitable et douloureuse. En découvrant les grandes lignes du scénario, je me suis dit que Dovid était sans doute un personnage secondaire, et du coup, j'ai été surpris en constatant qu'il avait davantage d'envergure et qu'il jouait un rôle moteur dans le récit. Le scénario oppose la foi et la religion, d'un côté, et la modernité et l'évolution des mœurs, de l'autre, puis s'interroge sur la possibilité de les réconcilier. Dovid incarne un être qui a consacré sa vie à sa foi religieuse d'une manière profonde et intime, et doit concilier sa foi avec ses valeurs humaines et les êtres dont il se sent le plus proche. Le film

explore ce dilemme qui se pose à lui avec subtilité et élégance.

Comment vous êtes-vous documenté pour le rôle ?

La première chose que j'ai découverte c'est qu'au sein de la communauté orthodoxe, il existe d'innombrables manières de vivre sa religion. Du coup, la première question était de savoir où se situait la communauté dont parlait le film sur ce vaste échiquier. Je n'avais jamais mené des recherches aussi passionnantes dans ma carrière d'acteur, à la fois sur un plan intellectuel et personnel. J'ai rencontré énormément de gens qui m'ont fait partager la vie de leur communauté. Tout au long du tournage, j'ai senti que je me devais de restituer à l'image la générosité et la chaleur de la communauté orthodoxe. Ce sont des êtres passionnés et d'une grande affection les uns pour les autres. Parfois, la communauté orthodoxe est perçue comme hostile au reste du monde et impitoyable dans son jugement des autres, mais ce n'est pas mon point de vue.

Comment pourriez-vous définir la relation de grande proximité entre Dovid et le père de Ronit, le Rav ?

Très tôt, il a observé chez Dovid une grande communion avec Dieu qui pouvait consolider la communauté, tout comme sa propre foi y avait contribué autrefois. Du coup, Dovid est devenu son élève. Il a passé son adolescence auprès de cet homme, si bien qu'il est devenu très proche de Ronit et de sa meilleure amie Esti - qu'il aurait pu très bien ne pas connaître dans d'autres circonstances car, dans le monde orthodoxe, les jeunes hommes sont tenus à l'écart des jeunes femmes. Après le départ de Ronit, le Rav l'a adopté comme son fils unique, ce qui a compliqué la situation pour tous les

personnages. Cet homme était une figure paternelle à ses yeux.

Sa mort, au début de l'histoire, provoque le retour de Ronit. Et Dovid se retrouve à ses côtés, puisqu'il doit aussi faire son deuil de celui qu'il considérait comme un père.

Comment pourriez-vous décrire la relation entre Dovid et Esti?

J'ai aimé la manière dont la relation entre Dovid et Esti est dépeinte car il s'agit d'un couple qui s'aime et se respecte. Le problème de leur union est à la fois subtil et crucial...

Comment avez-vous vécu votre collaboration avec Rachel Weisz ?

Nous nous connaissons depuis longtemps. Nous nous donnions la réplique dans le premier film que j'ai tourné au Royaume-Uni en 1998. C'était extraordinaire de se retrouver sur un plateau tant d'années après. Rachel a une âme de rebelle, et j'ai donc compris pourquoi le livre l'a autant touchée et pourquoi elle s'est attribuée ce rôle. Elle est intrépide et elle a cette étincelle de malice dans le regard.

Qu'est-ce qui vous a plu dans la direction d'acteur de Sebastián ?

Je me suis senti totalement libre, malgré les contraintes liées à l'univers où évolue mon personnage. Dès qu'on s'est rencontrés et qu'on a parlé de sa méthode de travail, j'ai compris que le jeu de l'acteur était primordial pour lui.

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