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FESTIVAL DE CANNES 2020

ORIGINEEL EN ZEER  
GELOOFWAARDIG SCRIPT!

- INDIEWIRE

EEN FILM VAN CHARLENE FAVIER

# SLALOM

NOÉE ABITA JERÉMIE RENIER

MILLE ET UNE PRODUCTIONS EDUARDO MAURAT ET ANNE CÉCILE BERTHOUMEAU PRÉSENTENT NOÉE ABITA ET JÉRÉMIE RENIER DANS SLALOM UN FILM DE CHARLENE FAVIER ÉCRIT PAR CHARLENE FAVIER ET MARIE TALON, AVEC MARIE DENARNAUD, MURIEL COMBAU, MAÏRA SCHWITT ET AXEL AUDRIANT. IMAGE: YANN MARITAUD. MONTAGE: MAXIME POZZI, GABRIEL SON, GAUTHIER ISEHN, LOUIS MOLINAS ET THOMAS BESSON. MUSIQUE ORIGINALE: LOW ENTERTAINMENT. DIRECTION DE PRODUCTION: SÉBASTIEN AUTRET. 1ER ASSISTANT RÉALISATION: CLÉMENT COMET. SCRIPTES: SANDRINE DOURDOIN DÉCORS: JULIE WASSEY. COSTUMES: JUDITH DE LUZE. MAQUILLAGE-COIFFURE: MAÏLA GERVAIS. RÉGIE: NICOLAS VAROUTSKIOS. AVEC LA PARTICIPATION DU CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINÉMATOGRAPHIE ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE, DE LA RÉGION AUVERGNE RHÔNE ALPES ET DE CINE+. EN COPRODUCTION AVEC AUVERGNE RHÔNE ALPES CINÉMA, PANACHE PRODUCTIONS, LA COMPAGNIE CINÉMATOGRAPHIQUE ET CHARLIE BUS PRODUCTION.

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# SYNOPSIS

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Lyz, een 15-jarige middelbare scholier is toegelaten tot een prestigieuze skischool in de Franse Alpen. De skischool is opgericht door ex-kampioen en de zeer ambitieuze Fred en zijn partner Lilou en heeft als doel jonge atleten te trainen tot de toekomstige Olympische kampioenen van Frankrijk. Lyz is nog niet erg ervaren en mist ook de emotionele ondersteuning van haar ouders die ver weg wonen. Fred en Lilou besluiten haar te helpen en Fred maakt het zelfs tot zijn persoonlijke doel haar dé ster van het Alpine skieën te laten worden. Onder zijn invloed moet Lyz meer doorstaan dan alleen de fysieke en emotionele druk van de zware training want Fred overschrijdt meerdere malen een verboden lijn. Helpt Lyz's vastberadenheid haar het trainingsprogramma succesvol af te sluiten en te ontsnappen aan zijn dwingende greep?

## **Korte synopsis**

Lyz, een 15-jarige middelbare scholier is toegelaten tot de prestigieuze skischool van ex-kampioen Fred en zijn partner Lilou. Op de school worden de toekomstige Olympische kampioenen van Frankrijk opgeleid. Fred maakt het tot zijn persoonlijke doel Lyz zijn ster te laten worden. Onder zijn invloed moet Lyz meer doorstaan dan alleen de fysieke en emotionele druk van de zware training want Fred overschrijdt meerdere malen een verboden lijn. Is ze in staat te ontsnappen aan zijn dwingende greep ?

## **Oneliner**

De 15-jarige Lyz wordt opgeleid tot toekomstig Olympisch skikampioen maar wordt door haar coach fysiek en emotioneel zwaar onder druk gezet waarbij hij meerdere keren een verboden lijn overschrijdt...



# INTERVIEW WITH CHARLÈNE FAVIER

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## ***How did the film come about?***

It's a very personal film. I was in the Fémis screenwriting workshop and that's where the project was really born. I had been thinking about it for a long time. I had never really allowed myself to tell this story and it was vital for me to talk about it. It required a climate of trust, with creation set in motion, for me to express what I felt deep inside. I needed to film what shaped the woman I am today. Once I began to understand what I wanted to relate, I couldn't let go of the subject. It was an absolute necessity for me to make this film. And this necessity became apparent to me as soon as I started writing the script.

## **Despite being very personal, *Slalom* is not a strictly autobiographical film...**

This is a very personal film as I grew up in Val-d'Isère and I skied competitively. But Lyz's story is not autobiographical in the true sense of the word. I did indeed experience someone having a hold over me, but in another sporting context. I preferred to use fiction because it allowed me to take a step back from my own story. Around me, I heard many stories of young girls who had experienced what I talk about in the film. I have received many accounts.

For me, film is something very personal and organic. I'm not someone who intellectualizes things and, until now, all my films start from something very intimate.



***The opening scenes are fairly enigmatic. We are between a very naturalistic and well-informed work on the sporting world and, at the same time, something almost fantastical with this snow falling at night that the character played by Noée Abita watches from her window...***

This opening scene really came together during editing. There was a strong desire to plunge the audience into an intimate journey. Right from the start, I wanted it to be immersed in Lyz's inner world. We had to be at the heart of her sensations and as close as possible to the visions she invents for herself, in a kind of hallucinated reality. I didn't want to aim for the documentary side of things, but to make everything organic and real. I'm not too keen on naturalism. The goal was to avoid all didacticism.

For me, there is documentary film on the one hand and fiction on the other. Fiction imposes an artistic and aesthetic vision. I get a great deal of inspiration from art photography and contemporary art installations. With *Slalom*, there was a desire to create a very strong visual world and to make an atmospheric film.

***Did the recent sex scandals in the sporting world have an influence on the preparation or development of *Slalom*?***

As it happens, the film was already completed when the story broke in the press. When I started writing the film in 2014, no one was really talking about all that. But I still wanted to denounce a taboo. When the #MeToo movement began in 2017, the script was already close to its final draft and I felt that I was heading in the right direction. It was strange because we had been working on the issues related to this for several years. I kept at it because, at that time, we didn't yet have financing or know if the film could be made. And I really feel that current events gave us the strength to keep believing in it when we were having trouble winning over the CNC and the TV channels.

When the recent sex scandals in the sports world broke, the film was finished. With *Slalom*, people will be able to understand my message. If the film had been released a few years ago, its reception would have definitely been different. But now people are speaking out. And we know that stories like the one I tell in the film are everywhere and in every sport.



***The ski competition scenes are impressive. They must have been a real challenge to film...***

Those scenes were filmed with the means at our disposal. On this shoot, every day was an adventure! Slalom was made on a small budget but I was lucky enough to have a passionate crew that was dedicated to the project 100%. I wanted to avoid the skiing footage shown on Eurosport. We had to see everything from Lyz's point of view for maximum emotion. I chose to film the ski scenes in the same way as the sex scenes, i.e. with giddiness and what the character feels.

The constraints, financial in this case, force you to be more radical. We managed to get a cameraman who followed a professional skier. They took huge risks. I really wanted these scenes to be as organic as possible.

***As in your short film, Odol Gorri, you deal with adolescence and the awakening of desire. Why are you so keen on this theme?***

Resilience and the quest for identity are two issues that are close to my heart. In my opinion, making films is an act of resilience. On the set, I discovered a family and a territory where I could finally be part of the world. All my films are autobiographical or are nourished by an autobiographical necessity because I feel I am healing myself by making films. Cinema is an ideal medium for listening, watching, guessing what is never said, and revealing the gods and demons that hide deep in our souls.

The notion of the quest for identity is very important in my journey. I had the impression of finding my way through making films. There was a kind of revelation. After my chaotic adolescence, cinema allowed me to dive into myself to sublimate my traumas. My heroines are a bit like me in the sense that they try to find themselves, take risks, fall and then finally get up again.

Odol Gorri and Slalom explore more than the simple notion of awakening desire. What I'm particularly interested in is trauma and how you recover from it. Talking about emotions in adolescence means talking about what manifests itself, motivates and moves you. It's a time when emotions are in motion, when they take shape even though we don't yet know how to contain, name and give meaning to what is going on in us. It is also the moment when we test our limits and when, in order to exist, we project ourselves in the eyes of others, even if it means sometimes going astray. Adolescence is indecision, adrenaline and risk-taking, incredibly rich and interesting sensations to film. On a small budget but I was lucky enough to have a passionate crew that was dedicated to the project 100%. I wanted to avoid the skiing footage shown on Eurosport. We had to see everything from Lyz's point of view for maximum emotion. I chose to film the ski scenes in the same way as the sex scenes, i.e. with giddiness and what the character feels.

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But now people are speaking out. And we know that stories like the one I tell in the film are everywhere and in every sport.



***The screenplay uses the device of the spiral in which the character of Lyz finds herself. Nevertheless, you avoid the easy solution of the spectacular. Instead, you eliminate all form of sensationalism...***

We always had to see things from Lyz's point of view. I wanted to emphasize her feelings, while respecting the temporality of the action. As in *Odol Gorri*, I wanted to follow the action, to the beat of my main character's pulse, in order to take the viewer on an intimate and instantaneous journey.

I don't care about the notion of genre or sensationalism. In fact, I don't ask myself that kind a question. It's true that the fantastical aspect is reminiscent of genre cinema. It comes from my desire for aestheticism or fiction, to plunge into an intimate journey because that's how I see things.

In the film, there is no trial. I didn't want it to come to that. I don't care what society thinks about it. But what Lyz lives through and why she lives through it spoke more to me. I deliberately chose to avoid long shots in which we could judge the character played by Jérémie Renier. I hope that the audience will see *Slalom* as an intimate manifesto on renunciation and resilience.

***The character played by Noée Abita goes through several phases in the course of the film. How can we interpret her behaviour at the denouement?***

*Slalom* is a film on renunciation. In the end, Lyz learns to say no. All the action is expressed through her eyes. To learn to respect yourself, you have to learn to say no. Personally, it took me a long time to say no and it often led to inextricable situations. It was very important for Lyz to say no. In direction terms, at that specific moment, everything around her exists almost exclusively off-camera. I wanted to end up on her face, so that the viewer is able to see her soothed and almost weightless. She renounces in order to find inner peace. During the film, she has gone through every shade of emotion. Rage, anger, pain, joy, rebellion... I wanted a very minimalist ending. It's the only time in the movie when Lyz is calm and at peace. She is really in tune with herself and emerges victorious. You can feel her gradually regaining her awareness of herself and her newfound freedom. To make the audience feel this ecstatic climate surrounding Lyz, we worked a lot in post-production, on sound effects, sound editing and finally the mix. The ending is optimistic and represents a form of wisdom.

***In Slalom, you're once again working with Noée Abita whom you previously directed in Odol Gorri...***

Noée and I had managed to tame each other thanks to our common sensitivities. She is like a little wild animal! She has a personality that suits me well. Like me, she is very instinctive and doesn't like to intellectualize things. For *Slalom*, we didn't really do any rehearsals beforehand. What I like is immediacy and spontaneity. On the other hand, she did some physical and mental preparation, like a top-level athlete. I wanted her to feel her body and integrate the gestures of a professional skier. For two months, she trained in Bourg-Saint-Maurice, far from her family and friends, with a sports coach. At times, I think it was hard for her. But once she was on the set, everything was simple. There was no need to explain anything and Noée just had to act according to her instincts.



### ***Why did you pick Jérémie Renier to play the coach?***

He was my first choice. He was truly the actor I dreamed of having for the part. He physically inhabits all the characters he plays and completely transforms himself. There's a genuine sincerity and commitment to his approach as an actor. Like Noée, he undertook physical and mental preparation. His investment was impressive. He went to Les Arcs for several weeks with trainers. To be credible, he learned the jargon, gestures and automatisms of the profession. His goal was to blend in with the crowd. And so, once we started shooting, he too had picked up certain reflexes.

### ***In the end, Slalom can almost be seen as a feminist film as the women take centre stage, such as the characters of Lyz's mother and Lilou, Fred's wife...***

It is necessarily a rather feminist film even if I've made sure that it cannot solely be summed up as such. There was indeed a strong desire to portray female characters. I love the mother character. I love people with flaws. This mother fascinates me. She feels love but, at the same time, she wants to live her life. Lilou, on the other hand, clings to Fred and lies a little to herself even if she wants to denounce something. She doesn't really know how to do it.

Generally speaking, I like the contradictions and ambivalence in the characters. In order to detect the hidden flaw in them, I also explored the ambivalent emotional contradictions that make them up. In life, people are contradictory and that is precisely what will lead to a journey that is certainly rocky but nevertheless rich.

### ***Does Slalom aim to fuel a debate and free up speech concerning the issue of sexual domination in sport?***

I wanted to break the silence a little. Originally, I wrote this film to open up the debate and make people think. And then the subconscious need to denounce such practices came to the fore as the main focus of the film. Sexual abuse and assault in sports is a taboo subject. All the same, I didn't want to make a denunciatory film that would judge the characters. Instead, I wanted to open up the debate and I didn't want *Slalom* to be a gut reaction to the issue of the status of women and sexual violence. It was about plunging the viewer into an intimate journey rather than pleading a case. The character of Fred is above all a man, a human being and not a monster. He slips up, he blames himself and he too is eaten up by guilt, desire and envy.

I make films to say things that I have never been able to say. Because I have the feeling that I won't be able to explain it orally and that people won't believe or understand me. When I make films, there is a kind of dialogue that takes place between me and others. Speaking up and then denouncing are part of a very personal process. Writing the screenplay for *Slalom* allowed me to exorcise a lot of things. I've always found it difficult to find my place. As a child, I felt different and, without the cinema, I think I would have completely cut myself off from the world.

### ***What are your future projects?***

I'd like to shoot a second film very quickly. Winter sports really nurtured my childhood, especially skiing and surfing. I really want to make another film, this time in the surfing world. Once again around a quest for identity and with women in the foreground. It will always be a bit autobiographical. But I also have other, less autobiographical projects. We'll see what materializes!





# Biography director Charlène Favier

Charlène, an explorer at heart, an energetic and self-taught filmmaker, is inhabited by the desire to share her world. After spending her childhood in Val d'Isère and several years abroad, notably in Australia, New Zealand and the United States, she founded her company, *Charlie bus production*, at the age of 24 to give impetus to projects that are close to her heart. Curious and conscious of the rigour of her profession, she trained in acting at the Jacques Le Coq School in London, in directing at the Astoria Studio in New York and in writing at the FEMIS script workshop, from which she graduated in 2015. At the same time, she wrote, directed and produced several short films and documentaries, all broadcast on France Télévision, including *"Free fall"*, *"Omessa"* (23 awards, 80 festival selections) and *"Odol Gorri"*, which featured in the 2020 César box-set. Her first feature, *"Slalom"*, with Jérémie Renier and Noée Abita, was announced as part of the "First Film" category in the official selection of the Cannes Film Festival in June 2020.



# CREDITS

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**Director** Charlène Favier

**Screenplay** Charlène Favier and Marie Talon

**Cinematography** Yann Maritaud

**Editing** Maxime Pozzi Garcia

**Sound** Gauthier Isern - Louis Molinas - Thomas Besson

**First Assistant Director** Clement Comet

**Script** Sandrine Bourgoin

**Original Music** Low Entertainment

**Produced by** Mille et une productions

**Producers** Edouard Mauriat and Anne-Cécile Berthomeau

90' / 2020



# CAST

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**Lyz** Noée Abita

**Fred** Jérémie Renier

**Lilou** Marie Denarnaud

**Catherine** Muriel Combeau

**Justine** Maïra Schmitt

**Maximilien** Axel Auriant