

A Perte de Vue & Les Films d'Antoine  
presents

Grégory Montel

Laetitia Dosch

Lolita Chammah

# LIBRE GARANCE !

a film by Lisa Diaz

Azou Gardahaut-Petiteau

Jeanne Vallet de Villeneuve

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**FRANCE - 2022 - 1H36**



It's the summer of 1982. Garance is eleven years old and lives in an isolated hamlet in the French Cevennes where her parents try to live alternatively. When two Italian activists rob a bank in the area, things take a turn for the worse. This event disrupts the lives of Garance and her family...



# INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR LISA DIAZ

## Why this title : Libre Garance! ? (Freed Garance ! in French)

It's an injunction to freedom for the young heroine, Garance. It's as if someone is whispering in her ear: "Be free", without her knowing exactly how to find that freedom. It is a way of launching herself into the world with her childlike imagination. The vertical side of the "i" in "libre" matches the tall, slender body of my young actress, Azou Gardahaut-Petiteau, when she goes into the mountains. She is trying to invent her own path in the face of her parents' doubts.

## Tell us about this choice of a very sensory beginning to the film, where sound plays a powerful role?

There was this idea of playing with her audio cassette machine, of the pirate radio that the children are making and that Garance orchestrates. It's the idea of a very particular noise, when you press the button on a recorder, which takes us back in time by the sound it produces. It's a jump in time, as if you were playing, to enter a memory. Garance records, then listens and listens again. And there is also a whole soundscape around it that translates Garance's relationship with nature, her freedom to roam the forests and meadows, to wander...

## How is Libre Garance! a summer film?

Summer, especially when you are a child, seems vast. We dream of adventure. We dream of things happening to us. It seems infinite, free. Garance and her gang of friends feel that this season opens up a whole host of possibilities, including boredom! The news of a bank robbery nearby creates entertainment from which they can fantasize. This is also the time when the children grow up faster, because they are away from school with their friends. And for Garance, who turns twelve that summer, it's also a time of transition. She still has one foot in childhood but is beginning to take an interest in what adults say about the world, in the endless discussions that populate those long summer evenings.

## When exactly is your story set?

It's 1982-83. Through this period, I wanted to tell the story of a political legacy. What does the generation of the 1970s, which had high hopes, leave to the next generation? This question of political transmission interests me. At that time, two trends were coexisting, between those who experienced the back-to-nature movement and the last fires of the armed struggle embodied in the film by the



Italian activist. What does this question in terms of hope? Where does utopia remain ? It's that moment I wanted to tell the story of this turning point in the early 1980s within a left-wing family, which questions their commitment. The mother would like society to change more, and she despairs to see that nothing really moves. The father, on the other hand, is finally convinced that living in an alternative way, as they do, is a form of commitment. 82-83 was a period of doubt, of being torn apart. It resonates completely with what we are experiencing today. What are we leaving to our children? How can we imagine a utopia today? How do we get out of capitalism?

**The father's character is characterized in a very feminine way, and the mother's character has reflexes that we usually attribute more readily to men. This is a form of modernity in Libre Garance!**

I wasn't aware of that. That's what came out naturally. The mother is this character of a woman who doubts, perhaps desperate to see that they will not be able to change the world as they had hoped. The father, on the other hand, likes to lose himself in endless discussions and is consumed by the daily tasks of this existence, between his vegetable garden and the renovation of his house. He's convinced that he has found his place.

Politics is at the heart of their relationship.

**Meanwhile, the children live their lives in the manner of Mark Twain's iconic character Tom Sawyer, who comes to mind when we follow Garance's wanderings.**

There is the adventure dimension of little bandits, a desire to get off the beaten track. When I was a child, I was very fond of Mark Twain. This smuggler aspect of the film is my way of staying on the side of childhood to tell a political story. Everything is told from the point of view of a child seeking to understand the adult world. There is something poetic about politics as seen from childhood, it is the imagination that transforms everything. Garance reinvents what she sees and hears, and turns it into other stories. She draws us into the realm of storytelling. And the character of Tozzi who suddenly appears at the bottom of the forest can be seen as a wolf, for her who crosses the mountain in a red hood.

**Why this attraction to childhood?**

I love working with children. You have to adapt, because their presence will make the sequences move. There is impertinence, joy, humor, action, very lively things that come out when they are in the frame, spontaneously. On the set, with the crew, our direction allowed all this to happen. I like the fragility that this brings to the sequences. That was also the adventure of the film!







### How did you film the children and the adults? What were your choices?

When you're with children, you have to make it as lively as possible, and to do that, you have to film for the long haul, freeing yourself from dialogue, even if the scene is written. Inside the frame, they are free. On the adults' side, we can see that it is mainly Garance who looks at them, questions them, records them so that she can listen to them again and understand them. She does this while maintaining a certain distance from them. Everything is always heard from Garance's point of view, what she retains or does not retain, how she distorts what she hears... The staging is up to her level. Sometimes the adults are there, but they are the ones who enter the children's world and not the other way around.

### Tell us about the two clandestine characters in the film, Michelle and Tozzi?

Michelle is a character who never says everything she is, what she lives. We won't know who the father of her child is. She is a woman who goes to the very end of her freedom. She doesn't care whether she is sympathetic or unsympathetic. She has a simple, equal relationship with Garance. She never infantilizes her. She gives her some keys to political understanding. And the things she seems to hide allow Garance to fantasise.

Tozzi is in a different predicament. He has no choice but to use Garance. I really built him up, thought of him as a wolf. He will frighten Garance, but at the same time she feels, out of loyalty to her mother's ideals, that she must help him.

Tozzi is a character at the end of his struggle. Where are the Brigades Rouges at this point in the struggle, when all seems lost? What do we do with armed violence? Tozzi allows us to raise these questions, at a time when, for him, there are only cracks left.

### You have to slip through these cracks to understand?

Yes, what interests me about Tozzi is the way in which Garance makes him move at her childlike height. She manages to disturb his certainties without knowing it because she idealizes him, she tells herself that he is the revolutionary she was looking for. She sets him in motion. I wanted a solid Garance, capable of not giving in to a powerful adult, of expressing her thoughts. To build her character, I drew a lot of inspiration from Carson McCullers' book Frankie Addams.

### How did you discover the young actress Azou Gardahaut-Petiteau who plays Garance?

Very quickly! I knew right away that it was her: in the way she spoke to me, in her physical ease. She is very flexible, very agile. She surfs and grew up in a small town by the sea. She passed the tests and showed that she can improvise very well. She has a sense of humour. I also liked her ability to be lively, very comfortable with adults as well as with other children. She had that gang leader side to her life too. Tom Sawyer!

### How did you compose the parental couple with the actors Lolita Chammah and Grégory Montel?

I like Lolita's fantasy. She did a trial run with Grégory. They improvised a lot. The chemistry between the two was very beautiful. Lolita exudes a touching fragility, which is counterbalanced by a great strength of character. Lolita is a city girl and moving her to the countryside corresponded to her character's story, at a time when some city people went to live in these remote corners to try to live differently. Grégory is funny, warm, with a voice that carries, and the ability to make suggestions, to extend scenes if necessary. Finally, the political dimension of the film was of great interest to both of them.

### How did you work with Laetitia Dosch, who plays the role of Michelle?

I thought of her as soon as I wrote the script. I like the way she brings her characters into a slight discrepancy. Laetitia wanted to defend this character of a free, ambiguous woman. It started well because Laetitia fell in love with Lozère where we shot. She met a lot of people there. She walked every day for an hour or two in the mountains, she is in sweat, in concentration, like Michelle who is a character who escapes from everything, all the time. On the set Laetitia questioned her character a lot. She made Michelle an elusive character and that works very well with children. Laetitia also knew how to find her personal way toward the character, her solitude. Michelle goes from community to community, she practices a form of nomadism that she likes and claims. Her solitude is the price of her freedom. And then, Laetitia has a very physical side, she knows how to hold up throughout the shooting. For example, she shot the birth scene seven times in long sequences. It was very beautiful, very strong.

### And Simone Liberati who plays Tozzi?

Simone and I have read a lot about the Italian armed struggle and this eventful, rich and very complex period. Simone was very keen to play one of the members of the Brigades Rouges. We talked about the ambiguity and violence of his character. Simone has this way of playing that is very different from the other actors in the film, both in his physical presence and in the precision of his dialogues, which did not involve any improvisation. There was also this particular quality which means that he needs very few words to make himself understood. With him, it's very much through the eyes and the body. It's the idea of the wolf in his den, of the man who stands in the shadows, who little by little lets himself be tamed, and whom we can finally approach a little at the risk of being disappointed. By experiencing disappointment, Garance sees her childhood bubble burst.





### Fear is also a notion that permeates the whole film. How is it cinematic?

I wanted fear to instill the film, particularly in the form of nightmares and tales. I feel that this fear is everywhere today. It inhabits our daily lives and our projections for the future. The first fear is that of not knowing where we are going. We are in a period of great threat, of great uncertainty. But there is still the strength of everyday life. There is childhood, and the joy that emanates from it, despite everything, as a form of resistance.

### Along with fear, there is also violence, which plays a significant role in your story.

Violence is the other side of the coin of political commitment. In commitment, there is always a moment when the question of violence comes up. This question was very much debated in those years. Did this lead to the end of revolutionary hopes and experiences? This is an unresolved question that I ask, which has been somewhat obscured today.

### In what way is *Libre Garance!* a film strongly marked by a territory?

We shot in the Cévennes, in Lozère, near where I grew up, in Ardèche. These are landscapes that belong to me very intimately, that I had a real pleasure in filming. There was a lot of return to the land there in the 70s and 80s, with a fairly strong community life. This is still the case today. The extras in the film were in tune with all that, them and their houses. I didn't feel like I was fabricating a situation. I also know that this is a place where people hide, where they can disappear, a territory where you can really get lost. There's a house here, a house there, and miles of mountains that are wilderness. It's a place where the fauna and flora are very present. A sparsely populated area where people swim naked in the rivers!

### To film these places, you chose natural light.

I thought about the light with my director of photography, Julia Mingo. We thought of a very gently worked light. I wanted to capture this light from the South that blinds us, that overwhelms us, very white. On the other hand, I wanted to recreate the light of the Cévennes houses, and the summer nights, softly lit in the most natural way possible. At the same time, I was concerned not to constrain my young actors with too much technique. What was important for us was to let them express themselves instinctively. To devote as much time as possible in my direction to letting them play and contribute.



# BIOGRAPHY

## LISA DIAZ

Lisa Diaz grew up in the Cévennes. After studying literature and history, she began directing films, documentaries and fiction. Her shorts and medium-length films have been selected and awarded in French and international festivals. *Eva voudrait*, her latest medium-length film, won the Audience Award at the Côté Court festival in Pantin and was selected for the Clermont-Ferrand 2021 Festival. *Libre Garance !* is her first feature film.



## AZOU GARDHAUT-PETITEAU

Azou is thirteen years old and enters the fourth grade. She grows up in Douarnenez, at the very end of Brittany, by the sea. She has two brothers, many friends of all ages, and a cat. She likes surfing and jumping from the harbour from May onwards. She also likes summer and walking barefoot. She had never acted before playing Garance.



## JEANNE VALLET DE VILLENEUVE

Jeanne is ten years old and enters the sixth grade. She doesn't like school at all, but she likes eating, sleeping, playing the trumpet, doing music and circus shows for her little brother, her friends, her parents and the parents of her friends. She has also lived in Douarnenez for several years.



## GREGORY MONTEL



Grégory started out in the theatre before making his mark in film and television. He was nominated for a César award for best male hope in 2013 for his performance in *L'air de rien*, directed by Grégory Magne, and then became known to the general public thanks to his role as Gabriel, an artistic agent, in the series *Dix pour cent* which is broadcast on France Télévisions.

He then went on to play various film roles in *Embrasse-moi* by Cyprien Vial and *Océan*, and *Diane à les épaules* by Fabien Gorgeard alongside Clotilde Hesme. In 2019, he plays one of the main roles in Baya Kasmi's series *Le Grand Bazar* broadcast on M6. In 2020, he will star in Grégory Magne's film *Les Parfums* alongside Emmanuelle Devos, as well as Andréa Bescond and Eric Métayer's *Les Chatouilles*. In 2021, he will appear in Didier Le Pêcheur's series *Rebecca* for TF1. Recently, Gregory Montel has been working alongside François Fabian in Aurélie Saada's first film *Rose*, and plays the lead role in Jérôme Bonnell's latest film *Chère Léa*. He will soon be seen on television in Paul Andrew Williams' series *The Fear Index*, as well as in Anna Winger's new series *Transatlantic* for Netflix, and in the cinema in Lisa Diaz' new film *Libre Garance!* as well as in Gilles Perret's *Reprise en main*.

Grégory Montel is currently filming the one-off *Les Enchantés* for Arte directed by Stanislas Carré de Malberg, and will soon be at the Théâtre du Gymnase in Marseille and in Paris.



## LAETITIA DOSCH

In 2013, Laetitia Dosch acted under the direction of Justine Triet in *La Bataille de Solferino*. She then worked with Christophe Honoré in *Les Malheurs de Sophie*, with Catherine Corsini in *La belle saison* and in *Mon roi* directed by Maïwenn.

She played the title role in Léonor Serraille's *Jeune Femme*, which received the Caméra d'or in 2017 in Cannes and earned her a César nomination. She then played the lead role in *Gaspard va au mariage* by Anthony Cordier, and acted under the direction of Guillaume Senez in *Nos Batailles*. In 2018, she imagined and created the show *Hate* at the Théâtre de Vidy-Lausanne, a singular duet between herself and her horse.

In 2021, she will appear in *Passion Simple* by Danielle Arbid. In 2022, she will appear in *Petite leçon d'amour* by Eve Deboise, *Irréductible* by Jérôme Commandeur and *Libre Garance !* by Lisa Diaz.

In the meantime, she has worked with Benoît Delepine and Gustave Kervern in *En même temps* and Just Philippot's latest film with Guillaume Canet entitled *Eau Forte*.





## LOLITA CHAMMAH

Lolita Chammah has been an actress since she was a child, having worked with Claude Chabrol and Werner Schroeter. She then played in Laurence Ferreira Barbosa's *La vie moderne* (2000), her first major film role. Her acting career continued with Coline Serreau, Claire Denis, Claire Simon, Benoît Jacquot, Mikael Hers, Zina Modiano, Marc Fitoussi, René Féret. She made feature films, but also short films, including one by Louis Garrel, Marilyne Canto, Mia Hansen Love. She was also written for custom roles, such as in *Gaby Baby Doll* (2014) by Sophie Letourneur or *Drôles d'oiseaux* (2017) by Elise Girard. She is also in *Barrage* (2018) by Laura Schroeder and the series *Aurore* (2018) by Laetitia Masson with Elodie Bouchez. She also plays with Julian Schnabel, Lorenz Merz, Christophe Le Masne.



Her career is punctuated by strong encounters, especially with female directors. She likes the diversity of the universe, but it is the artistic requirement which dictates her choices and her desires. She directed a short film in 2006, *À cause d'elles* and is currently writing a feature film. She also does theatre, having played with Julie Gayet in *Rabbit Hole* at the Célestins in Lyon and recently starred in *La visite* d'Anne Berest at the Théâtre du Rond-Point.

In 2022, she will be seen in Michele Placido's new film *L'Ombra di Caravaggio*, in Lisa Diaz's first film *Libre Garance!* and in Pascal Thomas's next feature film.

# FILM CREW

<b>Directing and screenplay</b>	LISA DIAZ
<b>Original score</b>	CARLA PALLONE
<b>Image</b>	JULIA MINGO
<b>Sound</b>	OLIVIER PELLETIER
<b>Editor</b>	JULIEN CADILHAC
<b>First assistant director</b>	ANTHONY MOREAU
<b>Costumes</b>	JULIA DIAZ
<b>Makeup Departement</b>	JADE IZIA
<b>Production design</b>	DANIEL BEVAN
<b>Lighting</b>	THOMAS COULOMB
<b>Associate production</b>	COLETTE QUESSON & ANTOINE SIMKINE
<b>Executive Production</b>	COLETTE QUESSON
<b>Production management</b>	LUDOVIC LEIBA
<b>Colorgrading</b>	LIONEL KOPP
<b>Sound editor</b>	FRED LE LOUET
<b>Mixage</b>	JULIEN PEREZ
<b>Produced by</b>	A PERTE DE VUE & LES FILMS D'ANTOINE
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