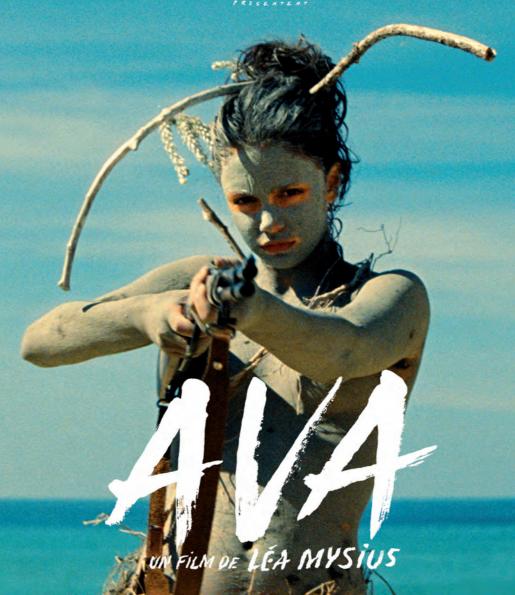
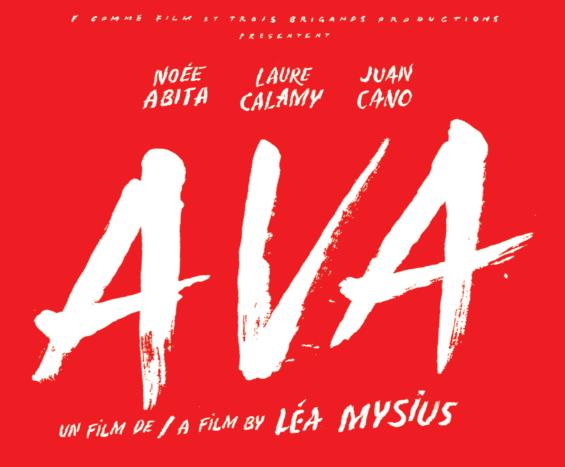
SEMAINE DE LA CRITIQUE CANNES 2017 F COMME FILM ET TROIS BRIGANDS PRODUCTIONS



F DOMMRE FLUM - TROIS BRIGALOS FRODUCTIONS - ARTE FRANCE DIN





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2017 • Frankreich • 105 min • 1.85 • 5.1

Ab dem 21. September im Kino

Pro Film GmbH og@praesens.com

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Pressematerial und weiter Infos zum Film unter www.praesens.com



# **SYNOPSIS**

Ava ist dreizehn und erfährt, dass sie bald erblinden wird. Während ihrer Sommerferien am Atlantik verschlechtert sich ihr Sehvermögen von Tag zu Tag. Vielleicht ist es der letzte Sommer, den sie voller Licht, Farben und Formen erlebt. Während ihre Mutter von der Diagnose überfordert ist und sich bemüht, so zu tun als wäre alles ganz normal, stellt sich Ava ihrer aufregenden beängstigenden Zukunft. Verunsichert Erwachsenwerden und des Erblindens, fordert sie ihr Leben erst recht heraus. Sie möchte so viel wie möglich und so schnell wie möglich erleben. In Aufbruchstimmung entführt sie einen grossen schwarzen Hund, der einem jungen Mann auf der Flucht gehört und lässt sich treiben...



# A CONVERSATION WITH LEA MYSIUS

#### What was your experience prior to Ava?

I began writing at a very early age: I wanted to be a writer. I grew up in the countryside, in the Médoc region where we shot Ava. When we were little, my parents showed me and my twin sister Esther a lot of films. We loved Freaks and The Night of the Hunter. We would also spend a lot of time in the woods and on deserted beaches like the ones we see in the film. And then, at the age of thirteen, we moved to the island of La Réunion. My desire for literature turned into a desire for images and sounds and I decided that I wanted to make films. After I left school, I returned to metropolitan France to study literature and then I sat the entrance exam for the Fémis. I enrolled in the screenplay department to learn to tell stories. I liked the Fémis course a lot. There's a great deal of writing, with very few theoretical classes, and very interesting people to meet... And you have the time to try out all kinds of things on the side. That was how I shot my first short film, Cadavre exquis, during the summer holidays with the students in my year to whom I have remained very close. I have built up a family bit by bit. On Ava, I was surrounded by a very young and very close crew. I love working with my friends and family - my partner, my sister and my two brothers all took part in the film. For most of us, it was our first feature film experience. Everyone was highly motivated, competent and pleasant. The film was shot in a joyous atmosphere.

### How did the screenplay for Ava come about?

Ava is my final year screenplay. I had to write it very quickly because I was late handing it in. It was born from the image of a scrawny and strange black dog crossing a packed beach full of flesh, cries and sun cream. The image of the black dog was already present in one of my short films, Les Oiseaux-tonnerre. With this screenplay, I wanted to explore further. The dog here is a sort of guide between people and places. He is the meeting point of the artificial and the wild, of reality and fantasy. He accompanies Ava on this journey towards sensuality and sexuality. He is the one who will lead her to Juan. The young girl, first interested in the (guide) dog will end up taking an interest in the master. She goes from childhood to adulthood.

## How did you come up with the idea of your heroine losing her sight?

During the writing period, I suffered from fairly violent ophthalmic migraines that obliged me to write in the dark. How is it possible to live in the dark? And, above all, how do you manage when it's permanent? I took an interest in the degenerative condition called retinitis pigmentosa. People who suffer from it see their sight confined to a circle. Everything around it is black. First, they lose their nocturnal vision, and then the circle slowly closes. This idea took me back to primitive childhood fears. And so I imagined the character of Ava at thirteen, stubborn and solitary, who learns that she is going to lose her sight sooner than expected, within the next few months. Forced to share this news with her mother, Maud, with whom she has a very complex relationship, the young girl will do everything she can to find her own way of dealing with the problem. Little by little, she begins to discover her other senses, realizing that she has a body and that she can use it while putting it to the test, excited by the feeling of danger. The film is the initiatory tale of a young girl at the turning point of adolescence, but it is also the story of the acceptation of a medical condition.

At the start of the story, Ava is disgusted by bodies - those stretched out on the beach, sprawling and indecent, that of her mother who has sex with men, that of her little sister who she views as a disgusting digestive tube. Losing her sight obliges Ava to come to terms with her body. Going blind also forces her to accept the fact that she needs others and to trust them. The construction of her adult personality and her sexuality occurs more rapidly because of it. It has to occur with and in opposition to her coming blindness, but also, as for other young girls, with and in opposition to her mother's body, with and in opposition to the body image reflected by contemporary society.

The loss of her sight becomes metaphorical before the fear of the "black wave". The world is getting darker. In the last elections, the Médoc cape was black on the map, with almost 30% of votes cast for the Front National. I have chosen not to name any specific places in the screenplay so as not to refer to the rise of far-right views in a confined area, but to make this into something more extensive that could strike any French town. If we wish to position Ava in today's world, I felt that it was vital to refer to this. The character of Mathias is the one who expresses these stakes the most clearly. He whispers to Ava, "It will soon be the end of our civilization, read the newspapers, look around you, you'll see nothing but black..."

#### Were you inspired by your own adolescence in writing this film?

There is necessarily a lot of me in the film but that does not make it autobiographical. The

locations are the settings of my childhood and the characters and situations are inspired Noée on constructing her character. It would be her acting debut. She had to get inside by things that I know or that I have read or seen. Ava has a complex relationship with her the skin of a girl of 13 who has problems with her sight. We worked on the body, the mother, which is fairly common during adolescence. What interested me in the mother—walk, the way of speaking, her gaze, so that it would all be natural... With Juan, things daughter relationship was also the relationship between two generations: the mother, a were different. He has such natural presence that we did not need to work on that, but child of the sixties, at ease with her body, and her daughter, much more modest, worried rather on the more sensual aspects of the role. Juan is a fairly modest young man and he about the present and the future and almost more conservative at times. Ava is going to had to feel at ease to play Ava's lover. learn to open up, notably through her contact with Juan and because of the fact that her The fascinating thing was that each actor really had his or her way of approaching condition means that she must learn to trust others.

The character of Juan is inspired by a boy I knew, a young gypsy with a bigmouth at my middle school who troubled me and who was violently rejected by the teachers and students because he was a gypsy. That sickened me. But he was merely a distant inspiration. Juan Cano, who plays the young man in the film, brought us his body, his past and even his name.

## How did you choose your actors for Ava?

came to see us. It was out first day casting and so we were incredibly lucky.

away that she was Ava. She had that intense and unusual look and face. It was a very for a first feature, but Jean-Louis and Fanny did all they could to make that possible. I'm powerful moment. Moreover, Noée was 17 but looked much younger. We needed very grateful to them. someone who was over 16 but who looked 13 for production reasons and to avoid upsetting a much younger actress with the nude scenes. Noée had every quality! Juan was much harder to find. We did improvised casting sessions with another casting Paul Guilhaume, the director of photography, completely dispelled my complexes in director, François Guignard. We visited around fifty travellers' camps, first in the Paris area, then in the South of France. We saw around three hundred people and we found him near Bordeaux. I spotted him peering shyly from beneath his cap and I knew right above all, that it's much more expensive. We shot L'Île jaune, a 16mm short film, a few away, as I had done with Noée, that he was the one. It was a second instant attraction. Juan is an Andalucian gypsy who speaks fluent Spanish and who taught me a great for Ava, we shot less than an hour a day - and that I could allow myself to use film stock. deal. He really nourished the film.

even before finding Noée. I nonetheless met other actors to be sure but as soon as we actor, beautiful and at ease with her body. On top of it, she resembles Noée! After that, there was a great deal of work ahead of shooting. We worked a lot with

acting and I had to adapt to it.

#### How did you meet your producers?

Ava is produced by F comme Film and Trois Brigands Productions, the perfect association of experience and youth. Jean-Louis Livi had seen the short film that I made on graduating from the Fémis, Les Oiseaux-tonnerre, and our meeting around the screenplay for Ava was instantly obvious and captivating. I had met Fanny Yvonnet a few years earlier at the Clermont-Ferrand Festival where I showed my first short film. We decided to found Noée Abita, who plays Ava, skipped school with a friend. They wanted to sign up with a production company along with Paul Guilhaume, the director of photography on Ava. an acting agency and they were given the announcement of our casting sessions. They I was very lucky to be able to work with Jean-Louis and Fanny, I always had a great deal of freedom while being guided and advised, from the screenplay to post-production of Noée came into the room. Along with Judith Chalier, the casting director, I knew right the film. We were able to shoot on 35mm stock, which wasn't really the easy option

#### Why was it so important for you to shoot on 35mm stock?

relation to that medium. Since the start of the digital age, people have been telling us that film is finished, that it is nostalgic and out-dated to want to shoot on film stock and, months before Ava. That allowed me to realize that I didn't really shoot much footage -What interested me about 35mm was matter and colour. Ava is a film about the human As for Laure Calamy, who plays the mother, I had her in mind as soon as I started writing, body and the elements: the wind, the sand, the water... matter in general. It is a summer film full of colours and sunlight. I wanted a sublimated image. Even if it's possible to do shot the screen-tests with Laure, it was obvious she was the one. She is a very good very beautiful things in digital, I feel it's more difficult to obtain the power and poetry that you can get with film stock.





## What were your directing principles?

I don't really have any principles but rather a way of working. I always write the screenplay according to the locations - which I know from the past or which we find ahead Ava's point of view and it's vital to experience it with her. And secondly because I of writing - and I like to do the shot breakdown before shooting with the director of wanted to blend genres: at the start of the film, we are in a fairly naturalistic register photography. I did a lot of preparatory work with Paul Guilhaume and Esther Mysius, and then we shift little by little towards a tale and a genre movie. Ava, who is "afraid the set designer, because for us the sets create the light and the light creates the sets. of having only seen ugliness", prefers fiction to naturalism, surrealism to realism. She It's genuine teamwork. When we arrive on the set, we know where to place the camera wants to make the world magical again. The film follows her on her journey. Blending and what shots we are going to do, even if we adapt to unforeseen conditions and these different narrative levels was one of the biggest challenges in editing. One of the the actors. This allows for a great deal of freedom at the time of shooting if we need elements that helped us the most was the composition of the score. The music had to to change things or work on the actors' performance because we know that we have set the tone right away: we are not in a film that is merely naturalistic. During our first a sound foundation. And each one of us can anticipate things concerning his or her meeting, Florencia Di Concilio, the composer, said to me about the screenplay: "It's like particular work. It's very reassuring.

For instance, we were able to work ahead of shooting with the animal trainer, Samuel the right angle from which to approach the composition of the score. Haye, who knew exactly what the dog Lupo needed to do and how we were going to film him. We never wasted any time. This was a challenge because the dog is a genuine How did you work with the composer? character in the film. He is both real and fantasized, as if he has emerged from one of I wanted something very organic, with strings and concrete sounds, rubbing, scratching, Ava's nightmares..

## Where does Ava's nightmare come from ? Was it difficult to film ?

I wanted us to fall into this nightmare without realizing it, like when you dream sometimes and can't tell what is real and what isn't. I'd like the audience to be drawn into it a to bring out the emotion. With Florencia, we approached the film in a craftsman-like little against its will. The nightmare in the film is pornographic in the sense that it shows and empirical manner. We therefore decided to record with mikes very close to the everything. The images are raw and aggressive. I'd like people to sense the fear and instruments and the musicians to obtain a fairly dirty sound. Our idea was to bring out violence that we can feel in a real nightmare. It is of course a very sexual dream - on a tonal harmony in the music that is at first chaotic and aggressive. As Ava loses her Ava's sexuality and that of her mother - but also concerns her relationship with her little sight, her feelings develop, she opens up, trusts in others and falls in love. The same sister of whom she is jealous and the outside world that terrifies her. I wanted to take the theme plays until, little by little, it resolves itself. Harmony is found. Because, in the end, transgressive aspect as far as it can go in our dream: her mother's clitoris, the execution Ava is a love story. of the baby... Everything becomes darker and darker up to the surrealistic shot of Ava swallowing her eye.

In my direction, I tried to get across this aspect that is both succinct and strangely linked in space and time. To achieve that, I worked with the editor, Pierre Deschamps, on making the characters disappear or teleporting them by playing on fake continuity as if there were no cut. I also managed to work in the colour grading with Christophe Bousquet to get across the feeling of a world growing darker. We wanted the darkness to arrive insidiously and make the audience squint to see without realizing that the image is increasingly dark.

Showing this nightmare seemed very important to me. Firstly because we totally adopt an adventure in Ava's mind, with a blend of fantasy, fiction and reality." I felt that was

very close sounds to sense the matter. The score had to have something primitive about it. Just like the image of the black dog crossing the crowded beach at the start of the film, I wanted the score to inhabit the images as a counterpoint to the additional music. It had to be subterranean and physical, it had to destabilize and upset the subconscious



# **CONVERSATION** BETWEEN NOÉE ABITA & LÉA MYSIUS

#### Noée, can you tell us about yourself? How did you come to work on the film?

Noée: I'm eighteen, in my final year of high school. I often dreamt of being an actress when I was little. Everyone dreams of that, well most little girls do. But I never imagined that it would be possible, it as an inaccessible world. My grandparents, with whom I'm living right now, are quite into movies. I've always liked Romy Schneider a lot.

Just over a year ago, I went to an agency to ask about auditioning for the cinema and they sent me to see Léa. I was with a friend. They gave us a short scene to learn. We both did the audition. We read the scene and Léa spoke to us about the film.

Léa: When she entered the room, we all knew, Judith Chalier the casting director, Lise Akoka her assistant and I, that something special was happening. It was Ava. She did an argument scene that was not in the screenplay - I have learned that it is not good to audition a scene from the film as no one can stand it afterwards. I was almost embarrassed to look at Noée, she was so impressive.

#### Did you feel that you had had a successful audition?

Noée: I was really happy to have done one as I knew nothing about the cinema and it was a way of approaching that world. I was also happy about the way it had gone: it was a pleasant experience. One week later, Léa asked to see me again. I read the screenplay as soon as they called me back. I read it very quickly, I was totally caught up in it, I liked it a lot. I could already see myself in it.

**Léa:** Yes, in fact I knew right away that it was going to be her, but I had to make sure that she could manage with dialogue, that she was sufficiently receptive to allow me to direct and shape her for the part.

## How do you learn to play someone else?

Noée: We rehearsed a great deal together, but not necessarily scenes, more an attitude. Léa: We worked on the natural side, it was necessary to forget the camera. And make the audience believe that Ava is only thirteen when Noée was seventeen. We worked a great deal on her walk: hugging in her breasts, hunching her shoulders. Noée has a very feminine way of walking, unlike Ava.

Noée: I have always looked younger than my age, people have often told me that! For once, it proved to be useful! After that, even if the screenplay had echoes with my own life, I really had to get inside the character. That was a lot of work.

Léa: We saw each other a great deal. Noée helped us with the casting sessions for the other parts which was a good way of getting her to practice acting. Our discussions concerned the character's body rather than her psychology: the way of pitching her voice, of moving and of And the nudity? finding a form of sincerity in her performance. We trained together. If we went for lunch, I would say, «You'll be Ava while we're having lunch.» When she looked at me and she wasn't Ava, I would tell her «No, that's no good!» We would do work sessions in which she simply had to eat, read a book or walk around as Ava, while letting herself be filmed without sensing the camera.

#### In acting, is it really difficult to become someone else?

Noée: As our work concerned the body above all, we modelled the character through her appearance more than her feelings and that made it easier for me. I had the impression of becoming someone else, with other thoughts, other ways of thinking, of seeing the world differently. I felt Ava's feelings. At the magic word «Action!», I became Ava, with everything that she is going to become, her questions, her fears. I thought about the fact that she didn't really like herself. Neither her body, nor her personality.

Léa: I would tell her. «More Ava!»

Noée: Or «You're not Ava!» (laughter). I grew fond of Ava, she helped me in certain circumstances. For example, at the time, I too was having nightmares. I don't know if Ava is right or wrong in acting the way she does, but she does it and if that brings her a lot, then that's good!

## What was the most complicated moment?

Noée: I wasn't looking forward to the scene with the diary. I had to have tears in my eyes, dig deep inside myself. But it went very well.

Léa: Yes, that's probably the scene we worked on the most. It's a difficult moment, Noée is alone facing the camera, in a single take, with a very literary text and nothing to help her perform. She did brilliantly.

**Noée:** Ava says some very harsh things. The complicated thing was maintaining the intensity. Léa: And using the memories of your own nightmares to perform it. To give it sincerity.

Noée: Yes, it was difficult. And some scenes were more complicated than others. The one where I

kiss Baptiste, the boy who plays Mathias. It was a sequence shot, we both had to be good at the same time, not like when you do angle/reverse-angle shots. We did a lot of takes for that scene. **Léa**: You must have kissed him fourteen times in a row and eaten fourteen hotdogs at five in the morning. You'd had enough by the end!

Noée: There were a lot of practical things that made it even more difficult: eating a hotdog, spilling the mustard, kissing him. And we had to do it with the same intensity each time. Sometimes, when you're tired, you get sick of it.

Noée: It wasn't a problem.

**Léa:** At the beginning, you told me, «I'm not going to strip naked...»

Noée: Yes, but I changed, accepting myself more easily. I realized the influence of family on our lives. As you grow, you learn that you can act differently from the way that you have been taught. And, in fact, I realized that it was no problem for me to strip naked.

#### How do you play being blind?

**Noée:** Above all, I had to imagine that my field of vision was very limited. As a result, I had to remember to turn my head to change my axis of vision.

Léa: Ava moves her head like a bird. When the light dims, she can no longer see anything. You came up with something, the idea of keeping your eyes open while having a completely blank gaze. And we also worked a great deal with a blindfold. I would blindfold her, she would take a broom and have to walk around like that.

### What's it like going back to normal life after such a shoot?

Noée: It's tough. Returning to high school after such an experience... I'm going to try to get into a local acting school. I've found an agent and I have had another part in Le Grand Bain by Gilles Lellouche. I really want to carry on acting.



# BIOGRAPHIE DE LÉA MYSIUS

After studying literature, Léa Mysius graduated from the Fémis screenwriting department in 2014. She has directed three award-winning short films selected for a num-ber of festivals: Cadavre exquis, Les Oiseaux-tonnerre, selected for the Cannes Cinéfondation award, and L'Ile jaune co-directed with Paul Guilhaume. She has also written with other directors, notably Arnaud Desplechin.

Ava is her first feature.

# LÉA MYSIUS FILMOGRAPHY

#### 2016-17

**Ava**, writer and director, Trois Brigands Productions and F comme Film.

Selected in competition at the 2017 Critics' Week.

Sopadin Iunior Award 2014

Les Fantômes d'Ismaël by Arnaud Desplechin, co-written with Arnaud Desplechin and Julie Peyr, Why Not Productions. Opening film - 2017 Cannes Film Festival.

#### 2015-16

L'Ile jaune, co-directed and co-written with Paul Guilhaume, 30 min, 16mm, Trois Brigands Productions.

Audience Award, screenplay reading at the Angers Festival 2015, Jury Grand Prize Angers 2016,
Best Photography Award at the Clermont-Ferrand Festival.

La Créature, co-directed and co-written with Paul Guilhaume, 8 min, Trois Brigands Productions.

#### 2014

Les Oiseaux-tonnerre, writer and director, La fémis, 22 min in digital HD.

Best Director Award at the Lviv Festival in Ukraine, Golden Angel - Best Short Film Award at the Tofifest in Poland. Second Prize at the San Sebastian Festival.

La Route des Samouni by Stefano Savona, co-writer, feature documentary, in post-production, Picofilms.

The Stuff of Dreams by Stefano Savona, co-writer, feature film in development, Picofilms.

Bison 6 by Pauline Laplace, co-writer, short film produced by La fémis.

#### 2013

Cadavre exquis, writer and director, le G.R.E.C, 26 min in digital HD.

CNC Quality Award, Best First Fiction Film Award at the Clermont-Ferrand Festival, Future Award of the Festival de La Côte Bleue in Brittany, First Prize at the Lundis du Cinéma in Dunkirk, Press Award at the «Un poina c'est court» Festival

Margot et Mahé, the story of autistic children who have undergone psychoanalysis.

Portraits in a documentary series

Shown at the Journées de la Cause Fraudienne

Fin d'automne by Ruosong Huang, co-writer, short film, La fémis.

Les Illuminés by Pauline Laplace, co-writer, short film, La fémis.

L'éblouie by Morgane Derriennic-Long, co-writer, short film, La fémis.

La Virée by Antonin Desse, co-writer, La fémis.

#### 2012

Tout le plaisir était pour toi, writer and director, La fémis, 7 min on 16mm stock.



# LAURE CALAMY FILMOGRAPHY

#### 2016

Ava by Léa Mysius

Bonheur Académie by Kaori Kinoshita and Alain Della Negra

Aurore by Blandine Lenoir

Embrasse-moi by Océane Rose Marie and Cyprien Val

Pour le réconfort by Vincent Macaigne

#### 2014

A trois on y va by Jérôme Bonnell Victoria by Justine Triet Rester vertical by Alain Guiraudie Les Cowboys by Thomas Bidegain Primaire by Hélène Angel

#### 2014

Week-ends by Anne Villaceque Sous les jupes des filles by Audrey Dana Vie sauvage by Cédric Kahn Fidelio, l'Odyssée d'Alice by Lucie Borleteau Ce sentiment de l'été by Mikhaël Hers

#### 2011

Zouzou by Blandine Lend

#### 2011

Neuf mois ferme by Albert Dupontel

#### 201

Alceste à bicyclette by Philippe Le Guay Un monde sans femme by Guillaume Brac

#### 2000

Bancs publics by Bruno Podalydès Chapeau de roue by Tonie Marshall Gentle Pain by Carsten Brandt Sauvage innocence by Philippe Garrel





# **CAST**

**CREW** 

AVA MAUD JUAN **JESSICA** 

Noée ABITA Laure CALAMY Juan CANO Tamara CANO PRODUCTEURS / PRODUCER REALISATRICE / DIRECTOR AUTEURS / SCREENPLAY

DIRECTEURS DE CASTING / CASTING

1ERE ASSISTANTE REALISATRICE / 1ST DIRECTOR ASSISTANT | Elodie ROY

SCRIPTE / SCRIPT

CHEF DECORATRICE / PRODUCTION DESIGN PHOTOGRAPHIE / CINEMATOGRAPHY

1ER ASSISTANT OPERATEUR / ASSISTANT

CHEF OPERATEUR SON / SOUND DESIGN

CHEF ELECTRICIEN / GAFFER CHEF COSTUMIERE / COSTUMES CHEF MAQUILLEUSE / MAKE UP

DIRECTEUR DE PRODUCTION / PRODUCTION MANAGER Patrick ARMISEN

REGISSEUSE GENERALE / MAINTENANCE CHEF MONTEUR IMAGE / FILM EDITOR CHEF MONTEUR SON / SOUND EDITOR SUPERVISEUR MUSICAL / MUSICAL SUPERVISOR

MUSIQUE ORIGINALE / ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

MIXEUR / MIXER

Jean-Louis LIVI et Fanny YVONNET

Léa MYSIUS

Léa MYSIUS et Paul GUILHAUME

Judith CHALIER et François GUIGNARD

Morgane AUBERT Esther MYSIUS

Paul GUILHAUME Cyrille HUBERT

Yolande DECARSIN Etienne LESUR

Elisa INGRASSIA Sarah PARISET

Maud QUIFFET

Pierre DESCHAMPS

Alexis MEYNET Martin CARAUX

Florencia DI CONCILIO

Victor PRAUD





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