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A MAGNET RELEASE

KOMPROMAT

Directed by
Jérôme Salle

Starring
Gilles Lellouche, Joanna Kulig

127 minutes / France

FINAL PRESS NOTES

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SYNOPSIS

Based on incredible true events, Jérôme Salle's gripping new espionage thriller depicts the remarkable story of a French public servant who unwittingly finds himself in conflict with one of the modern era's most powerful and dangerous forces: Russia's FSB. Gilles Lellouche stars as Mathieu, a gregarious and dedicated diplomat who accepts a posting to Irkutsk as the head of Siberia's Alliance Française. He hopes the change will be good for his family and struggling marriage, but before long Mathieu's staging of cultural events and support of artistic expression sees him fall afoul of local authorities. Accused of a terrible crime, he soon realises someone has fabricated a case with Russia's Federal Security Service - he has been framed. Arrested, imprisoned and isolated, Mathieu has nowhere to turn. Defending himself is impossible, the French authorities are helpless - it seems he has no choice: to try and escape.



Interview with Jérôme Salle

KOMPROMAT is being released six years after *The Odyssey*, your film about the Cousteau family. This seems long in the career of a director...

In fact, a lot of things happened, first in my private life, that took up a little time and energy. And professionally, I've still been busy since I've been producing. This may sound a little "boy scout" to you, but I had a lot of fun working for other people! Director is a very self-centred job where you are always asked for your opinion on everything and. And I think after five films I started to feel like I was drying up. So I kind of recharged my batteries by putting myself at the service of other filmmakers, other authors. That's what I did with Eric Barbier and Gaël Faye on *Petit Pays* or Jérémie Elkaïm on *They Are Alive* before moving on to the *Totems* series, for which I directed the first two episodes and was also involved in the production throughout the season. This long period without filming - along with the act of working with other directors who were at times far from my own style or way of directing - it allowed me to question myself, to develop my work.

That's to say?

I wanted a simple film, centered on the actors and obviously primarily on the main character played by Gilles Lellouche. Sticking to his emotions, often to his distress, but in an organic way, without artifice. No free effects, no "toys" on the set like cranes, drones, or countless gadgets available. The film was made with limited cuts, which is not necessarily the easiest because if you make a bad choice, it shows right away. It also pushed me to change the tempo of the editing. This is also the first time that I have made a film that exceeds two hours.

Going back to the origin of the project, for which you wrote the screenplay with Caryl Férey, how did the story come to you?

The film is very freely inspired by a true story that happened to a Frenchman living in Russia, but this "Kompromat" which gives its name to the film is a classic weapon in Russia. When you want to get rid of someone, you compromise him with fabricated, often terrible accusations. There are dozens of such stories, it's just that in general they only concern Russians. And then, in this instance, a stranger found himself trapped. Russia is a country that I discovered for the first time when I went there to promote both *Largo Winch* films, which had worked very well there. I remember being struck by the violence of the society. This was in the late 2000s, when Putin might not have locked everything down yet and we never travelled without an armed bodyguard and a driver... When I was there, I was told that commercial disputes between film distributors were

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sometimes settled with a gun and that the distributor of *Largo* had taken his family to safety in Los Angeles because it was -according to him - too dangerous for them to live in Moscow!

I then went back there for *Largo 2* and for *The Odyssey* and although things were certainly now more controlled by the authorities, the systemic violence of Russian society remained palpable. The relationship to violence, to physical force, is not the same as in Western democracies. There is a real cultural divide. I have also sometimes seen the contempt (there is no other word for it) with which certain Russians look at us Westerners. For them, we are depraved, decadent, weak people, who will let themselves be picked like ripe fruit the day they decide. A discourse quite close to the bottom of a Zemmour at home with his theories on feminization - associated with the decline - of our societies.

Obviously, it is not by going on a few trips to promote films that you can understand a country. But let's say that what I felt pushed me to read, to take an interest in this country. And when I heard about this true story that happened to a French victim of a kompromat, I saw it as an opportunity to write a political thriller. A thriller because we follow for two hours a man who is the victim of a false accusation and who can only count on himself to escape from one of the most powerful secret services in the world. And political because, as I said, I wanted to evoke the gap that exists between two opposing visions of the world. Today with the war in Ukraine, I have the feeling that the current context has completely caught up with this fiction on which we started working almost 4 years ago.

Moreover, at the time of filming in Lithuania, the situation was already tense in Belarus, and I saw that our local teams were very worried about it. We felt their almost irrational fear... And I must admit that for us, French, this danger seemed more distant, more abstract. Let's say that since then, this danger is becoming much more concrete!

The moment when Mathieu (played by Gilles Lellouche), the head of the Alliance Française in Irkoutsk, puts on a play in front of local notables with two male dancers on stage kissing and caressing each other, he seals his fate...

Yes, in a way. Even if this is not what directly triggers the Kompromat. It is more complex, and the reasons are many. Even if Mathieu ends up understanding why this trap was set for him and he explains it very well in a scene facing the ambassador, in any case, this dance scene is important. Mathieu is director of Alliance Française. He is there to defend France and its values of freedom, tolerance, love of culture. But he does it with a certain naivety, underestimating the gap that exists between the two countries! When he puts on this show with two men stripping naked on stage, simulating a sensual and carnal relationship, at no time does he think it's so shocking to the Russian audience in the room. It brings us back to our own naivety about what Russia is today.

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The current conflict unfolding in Ukraine is deeply cultural. These are two visions of the world which clash. All this tension had been there for years and the criticism we can make of our leaders of the past 20 years, whoever they are, is that they have not seen or anticipated it... At the start of the film, Mathieu also refuses to see the problem, just as he also refuses to see that his wife no longer loves him. Reality will catch up with him from all sides. He will find himself confronted with violence. Emotional, physical, or political.

How have you been able to feed your story, investigate this subject?

I remembered these feelings and the encounters I had made on the spot during the promos I was talking about and then of course, I went back there, to Irkutsk, where the initial action takes place. A city in Siberia far, very far, from Moscow, and with harsh weather conditions. But also, a historically liberal city with a very rich cultural life because it was there that the so-called Decembrists were sent at the beginning of the 19th century. Officers, Russian aristocrats who had attempted a revolution to impose democratic reforms on the Tsar. Failing in those attempts, they were all exiled along with their families to Irkutsk and, settled there forever, they took part in the cultural development of the region. It is also a city that is located a few meters from the beautiful Lake Baikal. In short, it is an exciting city! With Caryl, we walked around a lot before we started writing, meeting people, collecting documentation. In addition, he was also working at the time on a novel whose action was located in Norilsk, a Russian city near the Arctic.

In any case, what seemed obvious to us is that the Kompromat is a classic method of settling disputes! In Russia, the country is under the control of the FSB, (successor to the KGB), a sort of state within a state from which Putin and his inner circle come... This conspiracy method is frequently used to get rid of a competitor or a rival... Even if the file is corrupt or unsound, the system gets started and becomes unstoppable.

You mentioned you shot in Lithuania, in conditions we imagine to be quite complex...

We shot in Lithuania because, given the subject, it was very risky to shoot in Russia. In any case, we did not want to take the risk. It was difficult filming during a period of time greatly affected by covid, which we have all experienced as being extremely restrictive. We lived like hermit monks. When we finished the day, we returned to the hotel without being able to meet to discuss things, have a drink, or share a meal. Gilles Lellouche, who loves people and parties, found it quite an ordeal, but in the end, I think it served his character and the film. He found himself far from his family, far from his friends, from his bearings, completely isolated: like Mathieu in the story.

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The other problem with covid was never being able to see the faces of the Lithuanian team with whom we worked, since we were all always obliged to wear masks. And then not being able to meet them outside of work, just to have a drink, chat. When you shoot abroad, with a local team, it's essential to share moments off set, weekend drinks, etc. It creates an essential link. There, it was impossible. I remember it as a tough shoot. Fortunately, I had a faithful team around me with whom I have worked for a long time, in some instances since my first film: Matias Boucard my cinematographer, Laurent Ott my production designer, Brieuc Vanderswalm my 1st assistant, Carine Sarfati costume designer, Stan Collet, editor, in whom I had complete confidence. They made the film possible.

There is another fascinating aspect in "Kompromat", embodied by the character of Svetlana's husband, a veteran who returned physically and psychologically mutilated from the war in Chechnya...

I wanted the film to also show that it is first and foremost the Russian people who suffer from the policy pursued by Putin and his clique. The first victims of the current regime are the Russians. Outside the big cities, people live in often very difficult conditions. And then there are plenty of men like this mutilated ex-soldier. They were sent to the front like cannon fodder (yesterday in Afghanistan or Chechnya, today in Ukraine), without any respect for human life.

This man is broken, physically handicapped, and he feels even more diminished as he is confronted with the macho culture represented by his father, a local member of the secret service, who believes that he is no longer really a man.

For the character of Mathieu, you chose Gilles Lellouche. Tell us a little more...

We didn't know each other well, but it turns out we had known each other for a long time as Gilles had played Sami Frey's assistant in *Anthony Zimmer*, my first film. When I write a script, I don't want to think about possible actors: I think I'm too afraid that people will say no to me afterwards! After writing, when it was necessary to imagine the cast of the film, I therefore looked for who could embody the very French character of Mathieu. Gilles is very, very French... but beyond this character trait, he is above all a formidable actor who has continued to improve over the years. It always fascinates me; I have admiration for it... actors who never stop progressing. Each year, each passing role takes him to an even higher level and I have not been disappointed: he is a dense, complex actor who, moreover, arouses empathy, which is all the same an essential quality for the hero of a film... For the character of Mathieu, this Frenchman lost in a hostile world and who is going to reveal himself, to surpass himself in the ordeal, Gilles was perfect. Obvious even.

MAGNET

The one who will help him in adversity is Svetlana, played by Joanna Kulig...

Like everyone else, I discovered her in *Cold War*, and I was really impressed! Joanna has this charisma, this energy, this beauty, and this incredible personality... For this character, I was looking for an actress who exudes this complexity and not the cliché of the blonde Russian woman that we have seen in thrillers for years. Svetlana lives in her small two-room apartment with a diminished husband whom she loves even though he is only a shadow of the man he once was. She has her feet on the ground but at the same time, she will show great freedom and great courage by deciding to help Mathieu. She lives daily in a harsh, very real world, but she remains mysterious and complex. Joanna gave me these two contradictory but complementary aspects for her character. And then she's a fascinating actress to film. I also greatly admire the work she did on the film: her mother tongue is Polish, and she had to act in Russian and French! Without losing her truth. It is incredibly difficult. But she is very strong.

Around Gilles Lellouche and Joanna Kulig, you brought together Russian actors of tremendous intensity and precision...

I really want to pay tribute to them: Mikhail Gorevoy, Aleksey Gorbunov, Danil Borovyev, and Igor Jijikine. It was a privilege and a pleasure to work with them. They are actors who are both very free and very technical. They are incredibly delicate and intense. It was very interesting for us to also have their point of view as Russians on this story... And it turns out that they found the view of their country very fair. And I believe that this gaze is not Manichean because once again many Russians are also the victims of the regime. I really like the couple formed by Svetlana and Sacha, her husband. They touch me. Even Rostov, the stepfather, ends up moving me. He let himself be carried away by his anger and by absurd values and he knows it.

If we look at your filmography: from Largo Winch to Kompromat via Zulu or The Odyssey, there is this idea of travel and distance, often in quite inhospitable lands...

I like the idea of putting myself in danger when I make a film. This moment when I say to myself "I'm not sure I can do it"... I have neither the pretension nor the desire to analyze myself, I think that I have questions in me that have to do with the border, the confrontations of cultures.

I had been quite bruised by the commercial failure of *Zulu*, which is a film that I like very much, and I wanted to return to the thriller, with an entry point that is no doubt closer to our culture, so that the viewer can better identify with the characters. I think, I hope, that the public will identify with Mathieu, this man confronted with the violence and injustice of the Russian system but who will come out of it thanks to his values, his humanity.

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Interview with Caryl Ferey

In 2013, you had already collaborated with Jérôme Salle on his adaptation of your novel Zulu. Working with him again as co-screenwriter for KOMPRMAT was, one imagines, part of the excitement of this project...

Everything comes from there, absolutely... I think I had beginner's luck with *Zulu*: Jérôme had collaborated on this film with Julien Rappeneau based on my novel and he had told me very early on that I wouldn't participate in adapting it to script. It suited me perfectly: the most important thing was that the film be made... But what is touching is that Jérôme, who had never set foot in South Africa, asked me if he was legitimate to stage my story taking place in Cape Town! I immediately reassured him by telling him that he had carte blanche for the adaptation and that I myself, before writing the book, had never been there... We were immediately in harmony and when he went there for his location scouting, Jérôme called me to ask where this or that place of the plot had taken place.

What I also found wonderful was that the production of *Zulu* invited me to the set: it never happens that an author is invited! I met Orlando Bloom, Forest Whitaker, I was introduced to the whole team. We even climbed the steps in Cannes together! They are all friends now and we continue to see each other even ten years later.

How did it come about that you and Jérôme Salle wrote the screenplay for KOMPRMAT together?

My latest novel "Lëd" happens to take place in Siberia, in the city of Norilsk. When I spoke to Jérôme about it, he had just discovered the true story that served as the basis for *Kompromat*, which took place in Irkutsk. Knowing that Russia fascinates me, especially the underside of Putin's reign, he offered for me to work with him on a first version of the script.

What immediately interested you in this story?

The climate of Stalinist paranoia which is that of the Russian regime today: everything foreign is necessarily decadent, LGBT and therefore suspect! I saw it when I went to Norilsk: everyone feels watched and everyone knows that the authorities are talking nonsense.

There are also viral videos on the net where Russian youth make fun of the official "truth"... I happened to talk to taxi drivers in Moscow and ask them what they thought of Putin. Their response is "police", "mafia"! All this referred to the true story of this guy dragged into this kompromat which will turn his life upside down.

MAGNET

Is it easy then to dig into this vein, to gather documentation to feed the story?

The story was there from the start. The rest, the narration, is my job as a novelist. I put Jérôme at ease by telling him that he could make whatever cut he wanted, by putting the middle to the end or vice versa, that's his job as a filmmaker. There was a love dimension missing from the story, and so that it wasn't just an adventure film or a thriller, the character of Svetlana - who will accompany Mathieu on his journey - was born. Above all, we didn't want to make an incriminating film against Russia: all the secondary characters are rather nice people, like the Russians I met while visiting there. What we are showing is the grip of the FSB (the secret service), from which Putin came.

Have you had access to concrete testimonies of this practice of kompromat, this organized compromise that can ruin anyone's life?

I experienced it directly when going to Norilsk... You need the FSB stamp to access this city, which is a former gulag, a city that produces nickel in an unbridled way, considered as the most polluted in the world where life expectancy is only 56 years! Arriving at the airport (I was returning from Colombia, and I was super tanned, accompanied by a one-eyed friend wearing a blindfold), we had to wait a long time before being allowed to enter, despite our official documents. You immediately feel the tension: you are already a suspect! Then, talking with the locals, I understood that there was a latent fear of surveillance... They were happy to be able to meet strangers but at the same time they were fearful. Moreover, when I wanted to send my novel to a friend over there, customs refused the package: it was "compromising". All of this inevitably fed into the story of *Kompromat* that we embroidered, invented to make it a film "very freely adapted from". When you are a screenwriter, how do you look at your characters once they come to life (played here by Gilles Lellouche and Joanna Kulig), under the direction of a director?

I like characters who are anything but binary: what interests me is the grey area, not the white or the black! Mathieu was there from the start. The one we had to imagine was Svetlana, (first name directly inspired by Svetlana Alexievitch, Belarusian author, Nobel Prize for Literature whose work I admire), around whom we built the story. This romantic touch was added to the absolutely crazy adventure lived by Mathieu, populated by secondary characters who are not "only" bad like that of the father of Svetlana's husband. This writing phase is really exciting... then comes the choice of actors to embody all of this. We hadn't thought of anyone in particular when building the story. For Mathieu, it was necessary to find a solid actor, who agrees to shoot in difficult conditions, (and I'm not even talking about covid!), in the cold, having to dive into a frozen pond, etc. The idea of Gilles quickly became apparent but as he had to continue with Obélix, I feared that he was too big to play a guy who will spend weeks in prison! Gilles arrived with a sporting form, and he was perfect! As for Joanna, she's the great big surprise of the film! There weren't dozens of possible actresses and Jérôme and I loved

MAGNET

her in *Cold War*, so she was obvious. She is a wonderful actress, capable of finesse, strength, seduction...

You mentioned the difficult health and safety conditions that ruled the set of KOMPROMAT. Were you able to go there in the end?

It was never possible... Jérôme warned me very quickly that things were complicated. He himself was only surrounded by a very small French team there, confined to the hotel without being able to go out except to go on the set. Going there meant being sidelined, without being able to experience things... But we obviously talked to each other all the time on the phone, and I felt his constant concern: if the cases of covid multiplied, we would have to stop the filming because we couldn't postpone it, Gilles in particular being engaged on other projects afterwards.

Jérôme used up his wild card at the very beginning with contamination within the team and then we really crossed our fingers, holding our breath until the end. So yes, it was very frustrating not to share this moment on set, but in the end what matters is that the film is made.

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Interview with Gilles Lellouche

What interested you in Jérôme Salle's script?

First, the singularity of the project, its ambition, its narrative, and the role I had to defend. I also liked the idea of reuniting with Jérôme, whose first film, *Anthony Zimmer*, I made at the very beginning of my career... Basically, I find that the proposal represented by KOMPROMAT is quite rare: we don't see many films like that in France. It is a cinema that mixes politics, geo-politics, and adventure. I love that!

The story is very freely inspired by a real case, but it is based on this principle of kompromat whose goal is to compromise an opponent or an enemy by any and all means. Were you familiar with this process, apparently common in the East and more specifically in Russia?

Originally not, but even before Jérôme offered for me to make the film, I read an article about the mind-blowing story of the man who inspired the screenplay. I found the trap that suddenly closes on this guy who did nothing and asked for nothing amazing... When I received the script, I obviously investigated the situation even more...

From there, how do you work to give substance to the character of Mathieu?

Somewhat despite myself, there is often a sort of recurrence in the way I choose my roles: they are ordinary guys who find themselves in extraordinary situations...

What I found beautiful about Mathieu is the fact that he thinks he has already come to the end of his misfortune with the emotional drift of his marriage and the danger hanging over his family. But when he arrives in Siberia, hoping to fix things, to find the best... instead he will meet the worst. I saw him as the simplest guy in the world, almost disarmed or feverish at the start. Mathieu is already at the end of his tether when he will have to dig deep to find even more... His resilience, his courage, his pugnacity, and his desire to live despite the terrible injustice done to him touched me a lot. As if the embers were reborn from the ashes which would rekindle the fire...

What will trigger the kompromat is this piece that Mathieu presents as part of the Alliance Française in Irkutsk, a show during which two men kiss. At no time does he suspect what is happening...

But in fact he has no reason to suspect anything since he was offered this position for exactly that: to promote French culture in this part of the Siberian world. Open-mindedness, modernity: it seems completely normal to him, and it is! Mathieu is a man who does not hesitate to dress up as a princess to please his daughter. He programs this

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show where two men love each other, and he will violently come up against a mentality much more archaic than his.

He comes to understand that what he represents is what a part of Russian society hates...

Yes, and it's a fact: we are considered decadent there... On my small scale, when I made *Sink Or Swim* as a director, we had a terrible time finding a distributor for the film in Russia and when the film was finally released, it was a total flop! What that story told about male fragility, the fact of showing men in swimsuits, this assumed femininity is something that the Russian mentality absolutely does not want to consider or understand.

You shot KOMPROMAT in Lithuania, under extremely strict sanitary conditions due to the covid pandemic. You who like these moments shared as a team on a film, how did you experience this shoot? We imagine it would have been very peculiar.

I like cinema in its traveling circus dimension, the idea that everyone participates in all positions in the making of a film. In this instance, I am unable to tell you about the Lithuanian team with which we worked because I never really met them! When I arrived there, it was still the only non-lockdown country in Europe.

I started a mandatory quarantine for a few days and right after that, Lithuania was in lockdown! So I did not see a restaurant, a bar or a store during this shoot: I was alone in the evening and on weekends in my hotel room, with permission to go out for 1 hour by walking 500 meters away. And I can tell you that they weren't kidding at all with this protocol. No question of inviting 3 or 4 people to your room for a drink or else the police will show up... We were half a dozen French people there and we all experienced this as a great moment of solitude. On the set, everyone was masked with local technicians whose faces I never saw. Add to that the language, culture, and humor barrier: you get something very, very special...

Did that somehow help fuel your character?

Yes, no doubt... With Jérôme and the French team, we were immersed despite ourselves in what Mathieu must go through: this twilight atmosphere permanently floating over us like a threat. Jérôme also had to fight to ensure that there were no cases of covid, otherwise filming would be suspended by the authorities. Fortunately, we were able to stay united.

Your main on-screen partner is Joanna Kulig in the role of Svetlana, this young Russian woman who will help Mathieu...

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What energy! I had been struck by her performance in *Cold War* and here I was literally caught up in her personality. This woman has a joy of life, a vitality but also a rather incredible sweetness. I have the feeling of having shot with a very great actress... And then, outside the scenes, she is extremely talkative, tells you tons of anecdotes. Joanna was really my sunshine on this film... the language barrier was never an obstacle between us. She understands French very well, I'm not doing too badly in English and the fact of sharing this ambient sadness off set has brought us closer.

You are obviously surrounded on screen by Russian and Lithuanian actors: faces, looks, rather impressive characters...

Yes, I particularly like the actor who plays the role of Svetlana's husband, this soldier who has come back disabled from the war in Chechnya... The one who plays my lawyer is also wonderful: he learned his French text phonetically and I had to hold on a bit to understand and follow him! The scenes where Mathieu is in prison were also very strong with these actors who play the prisoners. In fact, I like these moments when you have to step out of your comfort zone, as if you had to play the survival of the character and a little of your own! You finish your 12-hour day and there is no reward... You find yourself overjoyed at what you did on camera and celebrate all alone in your room! You really have to believe in what you are doing in these moments...

How did you view Jérôme Salle directing this film under these very special conditions?

With much sympathy! I don't think there was a day during which he didn't have to deal with a problem linked to the pandemic and the health and safety conditions on set... Being myself a director, I can understand what state of mind he was in, and I think it brought us even closer. In the end, I would say that this ambient chaos is consistent with the harshness that emerges from the film. We were constantly plunged into disarray, survival, a bubbling of feelings and that's what KOMPROMAT is about... It's the first time I've experienced this on a set and it's an experience I'll never forget. But Jérôme didn't give up, he went after what he wanted to achieve with this film.

In your career as an actor, there are characteristics that repeat from role to role, those of a man who is: strong, striking, solid but also fragile...

You are right and I believe that it was Jeanne Herry in *Pupille* who was able to open this up in me by allowing me to assume this sensitivity. This is also what I wanted to show in *Sink Or Swim* with my words, my world and my vision of the men of my generation. I want to go to multiple characters by drawing on the roots of what is good or bad, as in *Farewell, Mr. Haffmann*. I like this density in the characters that I am offered in the cinema.



Interview with Joanna Kulig

KOMPROMAT is your first major role in a French film. We discovered you in The Innocents by Anne Fontaine in 2015 before your international revelation thanks to Cold War three years later...

But you know, my collaboration with French cinema actually goes back further than that! In 2011, I shot in the film *The Woman in the Fifth* by Pawel Pawlikowski with Ethan Hawke and Kristin Scott-Thomas, which was a Franco-Anglo-Polish co-production. I remember, I didn't speak a word of your language and yet I had to act in French! A few months later, I shot with Juliette Binoche in *Elles* by Małgorzata Szumowska, so for me, making films with French artists is natural. When I started working on *KOMPROMAT*, with Jérôme Salle and Gilles Lellouche, we communicated in English, so in a language different from that of our roots.

But at this time in my life - after the presentation of *Cold War* in Cannes, then the Oscars campaign and the filming of the series *The Eddy* in the United States and finally the pandemic - it was important to me to return to a project that draws its strength from Europe, with a European team.

Gilles Lellouche and you play characters of different languages and cultures: has sharing this also in real life helped you, as if to maintain a kind of distance that exists on screen between Svetlana and Mathieu?

Yes absolutely, especially considering that for the first time in my life I also had to play in Russian! So I had to alternate four languages on set: Russian and French in the film, English to communicate with the team and Polish with my relatives. However, I didn't feel any "distance" because I was in constant connection with Jérôme and it was also one of the first films to be shot just after the first lockdown, so we had a real feeling of regained freedom.

However, I did have to go into isolation for a week because someone at home had caught covid. This allowed me to build the character better and to talk about it with Jérôme via Zoom. He also told me that my working method reminded him of that of Sophie Marceau on *Anthony Zimmer*: this need to detail everything about the character.

What kind of director is Jérôme on set?

He is extremely precise, knowing at the time of shooting what he will need for editing, so he does not multiply the takes to infinity. Jérôme had seen me in *Cold War* and when he offered me this role, we were a little scared because the pandemic had just started: we therefore risked never shooting the film... But everyone hung on and we were finally able

MAGNET

to do it: I'm very happy for him and the team. On set, I placed myself as an observer, attentively watching the workings of the Jérôme-Gilles-Matias* trio. In fact, they were one!

Tell us about your character...

I would say that Svetlana is first of all an honest person, confronted with a difficult personal situation, between her husband returned disabled from the war and her intriguing stepfather in the Russian secret services. Despite this, she wants to stay alive, to have the right to happiness, to dance... then here enters Mathieu, this French expatriate in Siberia at the end of the world, caught up in this manipulation to compromise him. She absolutely wants to help him and will find herself faced with a dilemma: continue to live with a husband whose soul is dead or start another life, with a man who introduces her to the arts and offers her an alternative.

What was it like working with Gilles Lellouche?

He's a really talented partner. I did not know him, but I knew he was very well known in France. I found it fascinating to work with him, especially since our two cultures are very different. I feel deeply European, these are my roots. For the actors of this continent, the cinema counts above all and Gilles shares that... He is a very profound actor, he works on instinct, without doing a lot of rehearsals before a take. I asked him for some rehearsal time because I had to practice the French dialogue, and it really helped me! I know that he took great care of me, and I would say there was a real connection between us.

In the end, the fact that we did not speak the same language was not a barrier. I even remember real conversations about acting or life in general. And then I admit that I understand French well so what Gilles and Jérôme were saying to each other did not completely escape me!

What memories do you keep of the shoot?

I love losing my bearings when I shoot and that was the case again this time: nothing better than being alone in a hotel to prepare my character! I do my notes in my large, almost empty room, without being disturbed by my child who is still small. There I feel at peace, I am much more concentrated... To tell you the truth, when I shoot in Poland, I sometimes rent a hotel room opposite my house to be able to work on a role!

MAGNET

CREDITS

CAST

Mathieu	Gilles LELLOUCHE
Svetlana	Joanna KULIG
Rostov	Mikhail GOREVOY
Borodin	Aleksey GORBUNOV
Alice	Elisa LASOWSKI
Sasha	Danila VOROBYEV
Michèle	Judith HENRY
Sagarine	Igor JIIKINE
Julien	Pierre HANCISSE
Ivanovitch	Mikhail SAFRONOV
Shakir	Marius REPSYS
Rose	Olivia MALAHIEUDE
Serguei	Sasha PILTSIN
Stanislas	Marius CIZAUSKAS
Vladimir	Tanel JONAS
Julia	Larisa KALPOKAITE
Boris	Algirdas LATENAS

With the participation of Louis-Do de LENCQUESAING

CREW

Director	Jérôme SALLE
Script	Jérôme SALLE, Caryl FERREY
Production	SUPER 8 Production
Produced by	Albane de JOURDAN, Jérôme SALLE, Marc SIMONCINI
Production Manager	Olivier HELIE
Cinematographer	Matias BOUCARD A.F.C
Production Design	Laurent OTT
Editing	Stan COLLET
Original Music	Guillaume ROUSSEL
Sound	Rémi DARU, Fred DEMOLDER, Jean-Paul HURIER
Fist Assistant Director	Brieuc VANDERSWALM

MAGNET

Costumes
Casting
Post-Production Supervisor
French Distribution

Carine SARFATI
Gigi AKOKA
Léa SADOUL
SND