

INTERMEZZO FILMS presents

ANNA MOUGLALIS · MATHIEU DEMY · VINCENT BONILLO · RUBY MATENKO

# MY LITTLE ONE



a feature film by  
FRÉDÉRIC CHOFFAT and JULIE GILBERT

# SYNOPSIS



An urgent plea from Jade, with whom they once shared a passionate bond, brings two European men, Alex and Bernardo, to an unexpected encounter in the Arizona desert, in Navajo Nation. They are introduced to the harsh reality of Jade's life by her precocious, free-spirited daughter, Frida. Their views on life, love and even death are about to change forever.



# DIRECTORS



## FRÉDÉRIC CHOFFAT

Frédéric Choffat is a Swiss and French filmmaker. He has been collaborating since 1997 with Julie Gilbert, with whom he writes and produces photography, radio and film projects. **The Real Life Is Elsewhere** (2006), Frédéric's first feature film, was invited to festivals around the world; **Mangrove** (2011), their first co-directed feature film, was in competition at the Locarno International Film Festival and won the Best Independent Film Award at the CinegearExpo in L.A. as well as the Panavision New Filmmaker Program Award for Cinematography. He has also directed numerous short films and documentaries and has worked on contemporary operas. He has received several awards amongst which European Journalism Award, Leopard of Tomorrow, Best Independent Filmmaker Los Angeles/Best Cinematographer. Based in Switzerland, he lives between Geneva and Los Angeles. **My Little One** is their second feature film.



## JULIE GILBERT

Julie Gilbert writes for screen and theatre. The daughter of an ethnologist, she spent her formative years amongst Native peoples in Mexico, Canada and the United States. After studying modern literature and audio-visual anthropology at the Sorbonne Nouvelle, she studied at the ICAIC in Havana. In 1997, she met Frédéric Choffat with whom she has since collaborated on film, theatre and radio projects. Together they wrote **The Real Life Is Elsewhere** (2006) and directed **Mangrove** (2011). She also writes theatrical texts which have been staged in Switzerland, France and Québec.



# INTERVIEW

***Your cinematography resembles your lives, set between Switzerland, France, Mexico and the United States, faced with questions of identity, exile and mourning. With MY LITTLE ONE, your second feature film together, this time you take us into the Navajo territories. How did this project get started?***

We received an award for our previous movie in Los Angeles and when we went to accept it, we discovered the American West. It was an excuse or a trigger that we lacked to continue filming these spaces of all possibilities. After Mangrove in Zapotec territory, on the Pacific coast in Mexico, we wanted to make a film that takes place in the harshness and dryness of the desert.

***Why did you choose to set this story in the desert?***

Because biotopes and landscapes form our stories. In the desert,

everything is in sight. We cannot hide. The desert forces people to be themselves and in this story, it works like an open-air camera, forcing the characters to confront each other, to test their limits. There is no possible way out. This territory resonates with the recurrent questioning in our films of uprooting and identity.

And the desert is also initiatory! It's a magical place. The fact that Jade, played by Anna Mougllalis, lives on the territory - the Navajo reserve - reinforces the free dimension of this character. Because this territory functions as a place apart, with its own laws and beliefs. Jade embodies a form of freedom, a woman without attachment, living the way she wants with her child. The trio she forms with Mathieu Demy and Vincent Bonillo is also one of the questions: what is freedom at 40? What do you do with your youth dreams? How do you transform them?

***Starring in the movie are Anna Mougllalis, Mathieu Demy and Vincent Bonillo. How was the choice of actors made?***

The hardest part was finding Jade. A woman in her forties who embodies a kind of madness, a little disillusioned, rock, mythical, burned. When we met Anna Mougllalis it just seemed obvious. With her power, her beauty, her voice, her energy, she immediately became this Jade, a free woman in the middle of the desert.

Vincent Bonillo was already in our heads when writing the film. We love the rawness he brought to Alex's character, the way he carries those youth dreams, still hoping they will happen. As for Mathieu Demy, we met him during a stay in Los Angeles, and he quickly became this elegant, more conventional Bernardo, while keeping the romanticism of another possible life.

***Ruby Matenko makes a notable first appearance in this film.***

Yes, Ruby plays Frida, the daughter of Jade, the solar heart of the movie. A 9-year-old girl who grew up alone with her mother in the middle of the desert. A big casting call was organized all over the United States to find this pearl. And Ruby Matenko gives it all!

***By choosing to shoot in Navajo territory, what was your link with the population and what is your relationship with the Amerindians?***

It was essential for us to turn in real sets with nonprofessional actors for the other characters of the film. It simply fits in the way we work. After almost magically finding Jade's mobile home in the middle of the desert, we held an open casting call at Dilkon's Chapter House where



people from all over the reserve came! This is where we met Zoël Zohnnie, Kody Dayish and Loretta Chino, the Navajo characters of the film.

As for our connection to the desert and the Amerindians, it is rooted in our history. Frédéric spent his early years in the Moroccan desert and Julie, daughter of an ethnologist, spent much of her childhood in connection with different native groups in Mexico. And while traveling in recent years

in Navajo territory, we have met a population caught between American modernity on one side and, on the other side, a great attachment to their lands, their stories, their beliefs. It was there that it seemed obvious to us to anchor our story in this territory where several realities can coexist. Because despite this dying world (world on the verge of extinction), something subsists, of the order of the story. If we believe in fiction, fiction can save us.

***The music is a focal point of this film, very raw, very rock. Anna Mougllalis sings an unpublished version of Lhasa's song, adapted by Yan Pechin, legendary guitarist of Alain Bashung, considered as one of the most famous French singers and musicians.***

We imagined that Jade had been a singer in her past, rock and romantic blended together. And the universe of the singer Lhasa de Sela corresponded perfectly. So, we asked Yan to create

and arrangement that suits the voice and temperament of Anna Mougllalis. She herself embodies the music - through her rhythm, through her timbre, fearlessness and passion.

Then, when editing, we continued to work with Yan to find in his guitar a rock and distorted feeling to the wide-open spaces. We also reached out the duo Kristoff K.Roll, accomplices of the first hour, to round off the soundtrack with some more experimental music.

***« You can't wake a person that is pretending to be asleep. »***

Navajo Proverb





# ACTORS





## ANNA MOUGLALIS

One of France's most captivating actresses, Anna has worked in films by renowned directors Claude Chabrol, Chantal Akerman, Arnaud Desplechin, Xan Cassavetes and Philippe Garrel among many others. In addition to her acting, she has been one of Karl Lagerfeld long-time muses, featured in his Chanel ad campaigns.



## MATHIEU DEMY

A magnetic, critically-acclaimed French actor, director and producer, Mathieu currently appears in the Sundance TV series **The Bureau**. He has worked in films by André Téchiné, Emmanuelle Bercot and Céline Sciamma amongst countless others. His 2011 directorial debut, **Americano**, which he also wrote and co-starred in alongside Salma Hayek, was hailed as an homage to his parents, the revered directors Agnès Varda and Jacques Demy.



## VINCENT BONILLO

A gifted Swiss actor both in films and on stage, Vincent has appeared in Frédéric Choffat and Julie Gilbert's **The Real Life Is Elsewhere** (2006) and the short film **Article 03**. He also is a prolific theatre director of the "Cie Eponyme" and "Cie Voix Publique". He has signed several shows in French-speaking Switzerland, including **Winkelried** by Joël Maillard in 2006, **The Pretentious Young Ladies** by Molière in 2012 or **Paradise Now!** by Julie Gilbert in 2014 and 2015.



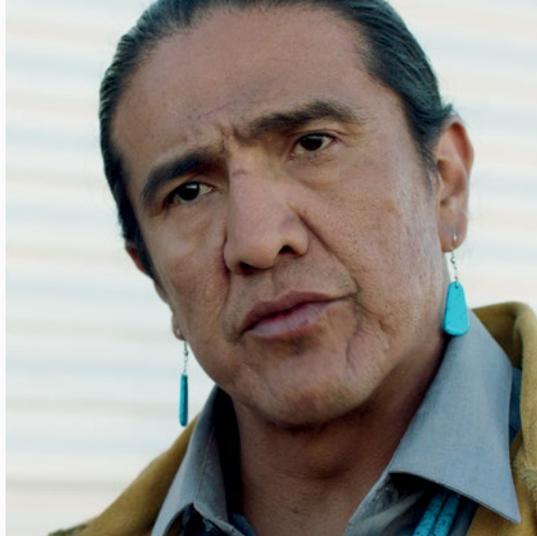
## RUBY MATENKO

Cast from a nationwide search in which hundreds of girls read for the part of Frida, Ruby Matenko makes her feature film debut in **My Little One**. Her television credits include **Transparent**, **Veep**, **Life in Pieces**, **Baskets** and **Miracle Workers**.



## JOHN DOE

Singer, songwriter, actor, poet, guitarist and bass player John Doe co-founded LA punk band X, of which he is still an active member. His musical performances and compositions span rock, punk, country and folk music genres. As an actor, he has dozens of television appearances and several movies to his credit, including the role of Jeff Parker in the television series **Roswell**.



## ZOËL ZOHNNIE

Is a new Navajo actor. After some work as an extra, it is his first featured role in film.



## KODY DAYISH

A young Navajo videographer, Kody is used to appearing in his own documentary productions. This is his first feature film experience.



## LORETTA CHINO

Living and working in the Navajo Nation, Loretta came to the casting call in Dilkon. This is her first acting experience.

## CAST

Anna Mouglalis (Jade), Mathieu Demy (Bernardo), Vincent Bonillo (Alex), Ruby Matenko (Frida), John Doe (Matt), Zoël Zohnnie (Ryan), Kody Dayish (Josh), Loretta Chino (Phillis), Jessa Paddock (Taima), Shenay Atene (Dolly), Tara Levine (Social assistant), Carma Harvey (Nurse), Danny Blackgoat (Ancient's chief).



# PRODUCTION



# CREW

Screenplay	Julie Gilbert, Frédéric Choffat, Jihane Chouaib
Direction	Frédéric Choffat, Julie Gilbert
1st AD	Sonia Rossier
Editing	Cécile Dubois
Casting	Carla Hool, Antoine Carrard, Kim Williams
DOP	Pietro Zuercher (SCS)
Camera operator	Frédéric Choffat
Art department	Ivan Niclass
Sound	Laurent Zeilig
Sound mixing	François Musy, Renaud Musy
Original music	Yan Péchin, Kristoff K.Roll
Costume design	Anna Van Bree
Hair & makeup artist	Thomas Nellen
Location manager	Alexandre Jomaron
Producers	Anne Deluz, Jessica Huppert Berman

## ANNE DELUZ

Before joining Intermezzo Films in 2013 as an executive producer, Anne Deluz worked alongside Alain Tanner, Michel Soutter and Claude Goretta, the Swiss “nouvelle vague” filmmakers. She then spent 17 years in the Spanish cinema industry where she was, amongst others, associate producer on Fernando Trueba’s **The Artist and the Model** (San Sebastian Film Festival 2012, winner of the Silver Shell for Best Director) and executive producer on **The Queen of Spain** by Fernando Trueba selected at the 2017 Berlin International Film Festival.

## JESSICA HUPPERT BERMAN

Jessica Huppert Berman (B.A. Brown University) has worked on the development and production of films by directors including Mira Nair, Abel Ferrara, Anthony Minghella and Gus Van Sant. In Spain she produced several of Fernando Trueba’s films including the Latin Jazz documentary **Calle 54** and Victory Dance (Spanish Oscar™ entry). Partnering with director David Trueba, she produced **Soldiers of Salamina** (2003 Un Certain Regard - Cannes Film Festival); the Doctors Without Borders documentary **Positive Generation** (2011), **Madrid, 1987** (2011 Sundance Film Festival) and the Movistar+ series **Whatever Happened to Jorge Sanz?** (2010, 2015-17).

## INFO

Production	Intermezzo Films
Co-production	Les Films du Tigre, Radio Télévision Suisse (RTS)
Swiss distribution	Agora Films
International Sales	WIDE

101 minutes  
DCP / 2,39:1 / Cinemascope / Color / Sound 5:1  
Original version: English, French  
Subtitles: French, English, German  
Switzerland, 2019



# INTERMEZZO FILMS



Intermezzo Films was founded in 1993 to produce feature and documentary films in a spirit of freedom and artistic standards, to foster innovative and creative movies. The company is committed to be an independent entity, close to the films it produces.

With over 50 films, Intermezzo Films is today one of the leading Swiss French speaking part production company. Designed with international co-productions alongside France or Germany, as well as an established European television network, the films are represented in the finest festivals and have received several awards (Sundance, IDFA, ACID Cannes, Visions du Réel, Venice Film Festival).

Most recently Intermezzo Films has produced critically-acclaimed films like **Bloody Daughter** by Stephanie Argerich or **Sonita** by Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami (2016 Sundance World Cinema Documentary Grand Jury prize as well as Audience Award and nominated for Best Documentary at the 2017 Film Independent Spirit Awards). **Before Summer ends** by Maryam Goormaghtigh was selected at the 2017 in Cannes ACID Showcase and **Sarah Plays a Werewolf** by Katarina Wyss at the Venice 2017 International Film Critics' Week.

The company is run by two Executive Producers, Anne Deluz and Luc Peter.

# CONTACT

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