

FILM MOVEMENT®

Presents

Emmanuelle Devos & Nathalie Baye in

MOKA

A film by Frédéric Mermoud

"A captivating and seductive thriller...at times reminiscent of the work of Hitchcock and Polanski." - CINEUROPA



France, Switzerland / 2016 / Drama, Thriller/ French with English Subtitles
89 min / DCP 5.1 / 2.35 / Color

Opens June 14th at Film Forum in New York

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Official US Trailer: TBD

Downloadable hi-res images:

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SYNOPSIS

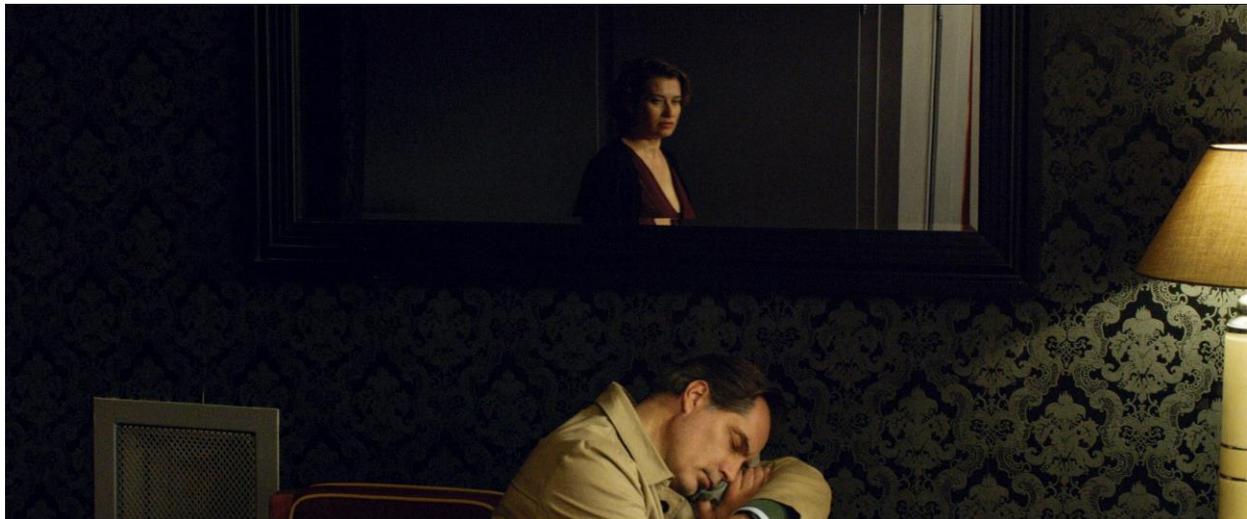
To find the driver of the vintage mocha-colored Mercedes which she thinks hit her son and devastated her life, Diane Kramer (Emmanuelle Devos) embarks on a trip to take revenge. She goes to Évian, where she has learned the driver of the Mercedes lives, but she now has to face another woman, Marlene (Nathalie Baye) – a beauty salon proprietor and owner of the car. In order to get closer to her, Diane pretends to be a potential buyer for the car, but the path of revenge is more tortuous and complicated than it seems. Adapted from Tatiana de Rosnay's 2006 novel, MOKA is a moody, riveting psychological thriller, showcasing the tremendous talents of two of France's best actresses.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Diane Kramer is led by one obsession: to find the driver of the mocha-colored Mercedes which hit her son and devastated her life. With a few belongings, some money and a gun, she goes to Evian, where she's learned the driver lives. But sometimes the path of revenge is more tortuous than it seems. Diane will have to face another woman, friendly and mysterious.

LOGLINE

A grieving woman pursues a couple whom she suspects of killing her son in a hit-and-run.



INTERVIEW with Filmmaker Frédéric Mermoud

Six years have passed since the release of your first feature film, *COMPLICES (PARTNERS)*. How did the project of making *MOKA* come about?

After my first film, I worked on the TV series *LES REVENANTS (THE RETURNED)* and directed half of the first season. But since *COMPLICES*, I wanted to work again with Emmanuelle Devos, who has a very special and inspiring place in my imagination. I wanted to live a new cinema adventure with her. And I already knew that she would be in every single shot. When I discovered *MOKA*, Tatiana de Rosnay's novel, I realized it was the perfect story to bring this project to fruition.

Diane keeps investigating despite all opposition. Why?

As I was telling this story, I realized that Diane was more transgressive than I thought. When an outraged or broken man seeks revenge we just accept it – it is almost a commonplace – but when a woman does, a kind of social super-ego judges her impulse. We tend to describe her as manipulative or disturbed. By the way, there aren't many films or novels that deal with this topic. It is almost taboo, probably because it reassures us to match qualities to functions; and when a mother decides to fight back on her own, through thick and thin, it is seen as a contradiction in terms.

Is Diane driven by vengeance alone?

At first, Diane is convinced that getting revenge is the only way for her to accept the unacceptable. Yet she gradually faces up to the humanity and complexity of the woman who is supposed to have ruined her life, who also has a life, a daughter, dreams... She even ends up being moved by Marlène. Her thirst for revenge becomes yet another step in the process of grief and understanding, a survival impulse that also allows Diane to discover things about herself and her lost son. Then she can keep afloat, progressively find meaning where there was none, start the grieving process and eventually take on a new lease of life. *MOKA* revolves around Diane's evolution, from her desire for revenge to a kind of reconciliation with herself.

The quest for truth seems to be Diane's overriding consideration. It was also the subject of your first film. Is it a personal obsession?

Admittedly, the truth is a key issue in *COMPLICES* and in several of my short films as well. Cinematographically speaking, when characters are searching for some truth, they end up facing their own lives, a bright or dark side of their personalities. As a filmmaker I am fascinated by this back and forth movement, because it is a source of emotion and tension. Beyond that, I often wonder what we get to do with the truth once we have found it: do we have to say it loud and clear? Isn't lying an essential part of life too? I have the feeling that ethics precisely play out when we start asking ourselves those questions. And fiction as well.

When did you realize that Nathalie Baye would make a perfect "prey"?

It quickly became obvious that Nathalie Baye would be perfect as Marlène. I wanted *MOKA* to be based on the meeting of two actresses and I needed someone whose presence would be as strong as Emmanuelle Devos'. So I needed to find an actress with natural authority, real charisma

and who would remain etched in the viewer's mind. Besides, I have always liked to think about casting in terms of contrasts: Emmanuelle is lunar, magnetic and strong, while Nathalie is rather solar and has a powerful life drive. Nathalie can embody really different characters, she can play a politician or a hairdresser with unbelievable ease, and I just knew that she would be credible as a woman who owns a perfumery in a small town. Finally, Emmanuelle and Nathalie had never played together. And it is always fascinating to make two actresses from different cinema families meet.

How do you direct your actors?

I always build around the text. But I think that, even though I must be responsible for the story as a whole, the actors know their characters better than I do. They have an inner connection with them, so I must stay in tune with what they have to say. There is a kind of dialogue between what the actor feels about the character and what I imagine. My directing isn't based on psychology. What I am interested in is almost kinetic, I want to know what speed, energy and tone is best for every actor in a scene.

Why did you shoot the film on the Franco-Swiss border?

In the novel the story takes place between Paris and Biarritz, but I found it interesting to transpose this confrontation between two women in a setting that would oppose two cities from two different countries, Lausanne and Evian. Right in the middle, Lake Geneva is like an amphitheater, an arena in a western, looking quite calm but with unpredictable swirls that bring out strangeness and anxiety.

Did you have particular films in mind when you shot MOKA?

Once you decide to shoot a film that tries to dive deep into the human soul, bordering on genre cinema, you cannot but think of great filmmakers like Polanski or Hitchcock, who do not shy away from asserting a stylized universe filled with characters more complex than they look. Lodge Kerridan's Keane also inspired me with its energy, even though it draws the portrait of a messed up yet so poignant man. When I worked with Emmanuelle Devos and Nathalie Baye, I couldn't help but think about American actresses like Gena Rowlands or Faye Dunaway. I often told Emmanuelle, who was on every shot for the 35 days of shooting that I wanted to exhaust her, to track down her every heartbeat and film her like an American actress. It is crazy how Emmanuelle manages to act every single moment, even the finest, with such rare intensity.

Select Press for MOKA

“The film is a surprising and ever-so-slightly twisted thriller that broaches the complex subject of revenge.” – Muriel del Don, *Cineuropa*

“A mother’s haunting grief propels her on an obsessive quest for answers and possible revenge in MOKA, a mournful, slow-burning psychological thriller adapted from the 2006 novel by Tatiana de Rosnay.” – Allan Hunter, *Screen Daily*

“The reliably interesting Emmanuelle Devos brings complexity to this sleek, Chabrol-like story of a mother's revenge mission...The title of MOKA, an elegantly lean, low-temperature thriller from Swiss writer-director Frédéric Mermoud, turns out to be less enigmatic than it sounds.”
– Guy Lodge, *Variety*

“Emmanuelle Devos and Nathalie Baye headline this Patricia Highsmith-like thriller about a mother who lost her son in a car accident and wants to take revenge on the stranger that caused it...A classy and classical psychological thriller.” – Boyd Van Hoeij, *The Hollywood Reporter*



CREDITS

CREW

Director	Frédéric Mermoud
Screenplay	Frédéric Mermoud and Antonin Martin-Hilbert
Based on the novel MOKA	Tatiana de Rosnay (French edition Héloïse D'Ormesson)
Produced by	Damien Couvreur, Julien Rouch and Tonie Marshall
Co-produced	Jean-Stéphane Bron
Cinematography	Irina Lubtchansky
Editing	Sarah Anderson
Sound	Michel Casang, Etienne Curchod, Franco Piscopo
Casting	Brigitte Moidon
Production Design	Ivan Niclass
Costumes	Françoise Nicolet
Original Soundtrack	Christian Garcia, Grégoire Hetzel
First Director's Assistant	Jean-Louis Frémont
Production Manager	Thierry Muscat
Co-production	Diligence Films / Tabo Tabo Films, Bande à Part Films and Sampek Productions

CAST

Diane	Emmanuelle Devos
Marlene	Nathalie Baye
Michel	David Clavel
Élodie	Diane Rouxel
Simon	Samuel Labarthe
Vincent	Olivier Chantreau
Déetective	Jean-Philippe Ecoffey
Adrienne	Marion Reymond
Luc	Paulin Jaccoud

BIOGRAPHIES:

Frédéric Mermoud, Director

Born in 1969 in Sion, Switzerland, Frédéric Mermoud holds an MA in Literature from the University of Geneva. From 1995 to 1999, he attended ECAL (École Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne), Cinema Department. In 1999, he received a degree in directing from ECAL, and in 2004, he received the Swiss Film Award for the best short film for *L'ESCALIER*. In 2010 he received the Swiss Film Award for best screenplay for *COMPLICES*.



Filmography:

- MOKA (2016) *Locarno 2016 – Piazza Grande*
- THE RETURNED (*LES REVENANTS*, 2012) - TV Series - Season 1, Ep. 5-8, *International Emmy Award*
- PARTNERS (*COMPLICES*, 2009) - *Locarno 2009 - Official Selection*
- À REBOURS (short, 2015)
- LE CRÉNEAU (short, 2007)
- RACHEL (short, 2006), *Cesar 2008 – Nominated for Best short*
- L'ESCALIER (short, 2003) *Swiss Film Award 2004 – Best short*

Emmanuelle Devos, Actress

Born on May 10, 1964 in Puteaux, Hauts-de-Seine, French actress Emmanuelle Devos is a daughter of actress Marie Henriau. In 2002, she won the Cesar Award for Best Actress for her performance in *READ MY LIPS (SUR MES LEVRES)* directed by Jacques Audiard, and has been nominated three other times for the same award. She was the member of the Jury for the Main Competition section at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival.

Selected Filmography:

- LA VIE DES MORTS (1991)
- THE SENTINEL (*LA SENTINELLE*, 1992)
- THE PATRIOTS (*LES PATRIOTES*, 1993)
- MY SEX LIFE...OR HOW I GOT INTO AN ARGUMENT (*COMMENT JE ME SUIS DISPUTE...(MA VIE SEXUELLE)*, 1997)
- READ MY LIPS (*SUR MES LEVRES*, 2002)
- THE ADVERSARY (2003)
- KINGS AND QUEEN (*ROIS ET REINE*, 2004)
- IN THE BEGINNING (2010)
- JUST A SIGH (2013)
- IF YOU DON'T, I WILL (2014)
- PLATONOV (2015)
- FRANK & LOLA (2016)
- MOKA (2016)

Nathalie Baye, Actress

Nathalie Baye was born on July 6, 1948 in Mainneville, Eure, Normandy to Claude Baye and Denise Coustet, two painters. She is a French film, television, and stage actress. Her career began in 1970, and she has appeared in more than 80 films. A ten-time Cesar Award nominee, her four wins were for EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF (*SAUVE QUI PEUT (LA VIE)*, 1980), A STRANGE AFFAIR (*UNE ETRANGE AFFAIRE*, 1981), *LA BALANCE* (1982), and THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT (2005). In 2009, she was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

Selected Filmography:

- DAY FOR NIGHT (*LA NUIT AMERICAINE*, 1973)
- THE LAST WOMAN (1976)
- THE GREEN ROOM (1978)
- EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF (*SAUVE QUI PEUT (LA VIE)*, 1980)
- A STRANGE AFFAIR (*UNE ETRANGE AFFAIRE*, 1981)
- THE RETURN OF MARTIN GUERRE (*LE RETOUR DE MARTIN GUERRE*, 1982)
- *LA BALANCE* (1982)
- OUR STORY (1984)
- THE VOICE (1992)
- FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT: PORTRAITS VOLES (1994)
- LA MERE (1995)
- CATCH ME IF YOU CAN (2002)
- THE FLOWER OF EVIL (*LA FLEUR DU MAL*, 2002)
- THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT (2005)
- TELL NO ONE (2006)
- A FRENCH GIGOLO (2008)
- FACE (2009)
- QUEENS OF THE RING (2013)
- THE ASSISTANT (2015)
- IT'S ONLY THE END OF THE WORLD (2016)
- MOKA (2016)

SELECTED FESTIVALS & AWARDS

Locarno Film International Festival – Official Selection, *Variety* Piazza Grande Award- 2016

Santa Barbara International Film Festival- Official Selection - 2017

19th International Films by the Sea Festival, Netherland – Official Competition- 2017

Haifa Intel Film Festival, Israel – Official Competition- 2016

Miami International Film Festival - Official Selection - 2017

ABOUT FILM MOVEMENT

Celebrating its 15th year, Film Movement is a North American distributor of award-winning independent and foreign films based in New York City. Film Movement has released more than 250 feature films and shorts culled from prestigious film festivals worldwide, and last year it had its first Academy Award-nominated film, Naji Abu Nowar's THEEB. Film Movement's theatrical distribution strategy has evolved to include promising American independent films, documentaries, and an even stronger slate of foreign art house titles. Its catalog includes titles by directors such as Hirokazu Kore-eda, Maren Ade, Jessica Hausner, Andrei Konchalovsky, Andrzej Wajda, Diane Kurys, Ciro Guerra and Melanie Laurent. In 2015, Film Movement launched its reissue label Film Movement Classics, featuring new restorations released theatrically as well as on Blu-ray and DVD, including films by such noted directors as Eric Rohmer, Peter Greenaway, Bille August, Marleen Gorris, Takeshi Kitano, Arturo Ripstein, and Ettore Scola. For more information, please visit www.filmmovement.com.