



MARVELOUS MORNINGS

A FILM BY AVRIL BESSON



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE 2026
SÉANCE SPÉCIALE



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MARVELOUS MORNINGS

(LES MATINS MERVEILLEUX)

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2026 | FRANCE | ASPECT RATIO 2.40 | SOUND 5.1 | COLOUR | 1 H 27 MIN

INTERNATIONAL SALES
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SYNOPSIS

With a box of old records in her trunk, Charlie drives south to deliver them to a mysterious former disco dancer. She doesn't yet know those vinyls will revive her mother's steps, or that her Mediterranean getaway will lead her to Marina, a charming waitress dreaming of freedom beyond the little town's pizzeria.

INTERVIEW

WITH THE DIRECTOR

In MARVELOUS MORNINGS, we see the same duo as in your short film Queen Size, with similarities but also differences. How does this feature film relate to the short film?

I started by writing the feature film, but securing funding was taking time and I felt that, when reading the script, it was hard to really picture Charlie and Marina. So I decided to make a short film with India Hair and Raya Martigny, conceived as a teaser to bring my characters to life on screen and showcase the chemistry between the actresses. That short film delighted me with their partnership and allowed the actresses to develop their characters for the feature.

One gets the feeling that these two films were written to celebrate India Hair's very burlesque quirkiness. What is your relationship with this actress?

I'd seen India in Camille Redouble and had fallen head over heels for her. When I met her, I was at La Fémis, she was at the Conservatoire. We both shared a love of British comedy; her mother is English and I grew up in London, so I think we recognised something in each other. I wrote her a role in a pilot for a comedy series. I found it really hard to have confidence in what I was doing; I often hid behind the comedy. But she, for her part, took our collaboration very seriously; she'd do vocal warm-ups before the takes, and I felt really valued. It was obvious that my first film would be written for her. And it stayed that way for the ten years that followed.



How did you cast Raya Martigny, a model who is very popular on social media, for the role of Marina?

I knew Raya from social media at a time when she was already doing one fashion shoot after another and attending glamorous parties. A mutual friend recommended her to me, but I felt she was very different from Marina. As it was during the Covid pandemic, we couldn't hold auditions, so we asked for self-tapes. In her video, Raya filmed herself in her bedroom, with no hair or make-up, giving me a glimpse into her private life and a vulnerability that really interested me for the role of Marina. In the end, she's very much like Marina, but she has a way with the camera like no one else, and can easily switch between different personas. I was lucky that she trusted me and agreed to share a bit of her truth by taking the risk of playing a woman so much like herself.

Charlie and Marina form a duo who are complete opposites, right down to their appearance. How did you portray this antagonism, which is so compelling on screen?

I knew I didn't want to turn their physical contrast into a source of comedy. Before we started filming, I wondered whether it was actually possible to shoot wide shots of the actresses standing 30 cm apart, and my short film helped me feel confident about it. At the beginning of the film, I isolated them a great deal within the frame, using numerous shot-reverse shots. It's a film about a meeting, and I wanted the audience to feel close to them, to their gazes, so they could sense the emergence of romantic feelings.

On the other hand, in the intimate scenes, I wanted to limit the editing to let them evolve in real time within a given frame, which actually reinforced that intimacy. Just before filming, I'd watched the romantic comedy *Happiest Season*, where the difference in height between Kristen Stewart and Mackenzie Davis plays a big part in their dynamic, in who takes the lead and who doesn't. The scene of the first kiss between Charlie and Marina was a real challenge because India could barely reach Marina's face; she was on tiptoes, almost out of breath. But I think it's beautiful that it's her who kisses her. Despite her six-foot-three height, Marina seems much more fragile, demure, almost childlike.

Marina's trans identity isn't an issue; there's no mention of it, which is very rare in French fiction. Was that a deliberate choice from the writing stage?

Yes. It was deliberate. I wanted to write the film from my perspective as an ally, and I wanted to tell the story of a trans woman in her thirties, already settled in her life, far removed from narratives of transition or coming-of-age. The fact that Marina is trans is not a source of conflict. The conflict lies with her parents, who abandoned her, instilling in her a panic-stricken fear of intimacy. She was abandoned, and it could happen again, so the best way to protect her fragile equilibrium is to keep others at a slight distance. What's more, Marina lives in a village. She's the local girl; people love her, they protect her. So she's managed to create a sort of safety bubble for herself. But that doesn't mean transphobia has disappeared.

Far from it. When she wants to make her voice heard, people prefer to keep her at a distance, so as "not to stir things up". They make her understand that she is an obstacle to the very cause she defends a form of violence that is, ultimately, even more insidious and cruel. The fact that this shocks Charlie says a lot about his naivety, but ultimately it is this very naivety that will win Marina over. Charlie has no preconceived notions.

So you're sticking with this idea of a film built around kind-hearted characters who are good to one another.

Yes, I didn't want any conflict in my film, and that's probably why I found it so difficult to get it funded. I'd written a scene where Marina rejects Charlie. I'd often heard about this rejection of emotional intimacy among some trans people who are sexually fulfilled but who fear love, because it involves building a relationship with another person and therefore requires changing oneself a little. I found it tragic that intimacy could be so difficult, and I wanted to include that in my film. But I hated the idea of them arguing; I found it too clichéd. So I cut the scene. I find it more touching that they clearly tell each other they have no idea how to be a couple, but that they can still give it a go to see.

Speaking of intimacy, what were the main challenges with the love scenes between Charlie and Marina?

I edited *Sex and the Series*, Iris Brey's documentary series on the

portrayal of female sexuality in TV series, and I remember an actress from *Transparent* saying she wanted to see classic sex scenes featuring transgender characters, without violence or invisibilisation. But I'm very modest and didn't want any nudity. So I was relieved to come up with this playful idea centred on consent, which fits the tone of the film and defuses the situation through humour. We then shot the scene in the shower, sexier and less childish, but allowing them to remain clothed thanks to the very opaque screen. As Raya and India didn't want an intimacy coordinator, the three of us co-directed these scenes. They watched every take with me, and we made adjustments. They were absolutely brilliant and it felt very safe. I must admit I felt a bit like I was watching my sisters kissing each other, it was hard to watch Charlie and Marina!

It's a film about a duo, which Titou's character complements without undermining or upsetting the balance. How did you conceive his presence so that he would fit in without disrupting the dynamic?

I didn't want to think of Titou, that wine merchant from *Cavalière* who loves disco and exists in real life, as a secondary character who would provide new momentum to the story. For a long time, there was some doubt in the script about his paternity; in fact, that was supposed to be the start of Charlie's quest, as he planned to set out in search of his father. But when you introduce that sort of plot twist in cinema, you can't backtrack, and his story



wouldn't have been able to intertwine with Marina's. I still wanted Titou to represent a sort of father figure, though, so as to preserve the idea of a chosen family that's present in the film. So I decided to keep that doubt about his paternity by defusing it right from the start. I quickly realised that he had a very powerful emotional presence and that his simple melancholy brought a lot to the film. I see him as the ghost of a failed love story that drives Charlie and Marina to live out their own. It's as if they were avenging his regrets.

How did Eric Cantona come to join the project in this very touching role?

I absolutely wanted an actor with a southern accent to play Titou. It was Constance Demontoy, the casting director, who suggested Eric Cantona to me, and it immediately felt like the obvious choice because he has a masculinity that I love, which is nothing like the cliché it might be. What's more, when I was a child living in London, he played for Manchester United; he was a living god. I found it particularly amusing to write him a role that was the polar opposite of the legend, that of a very simple, gentle, dreamy and solitary man. It took a long time for the film to come to fruition, but he remained very loyal to the project and played along right to the end, from the seventies costumes to learning the disco choreography.

You film a very beautiful location in the south of France, but in winter, when it's deserted. Was that to avoid a kind of "urban gaze", or simply out of necessity, particularly budgetary constraints?

The starting point for the screenplay is the setting of Cavalière beach. I've been going there on holiday for as long as I can remember, I've spent a lot of time there in both summer and winter, and it's the place where all my firsts happened. I love empty spaces in films, but emptiness can quickly look artificial on screen, and we often prefer to fill the frame with extras to bring them to life. Winter beaches are therefore both beautiful and a pretext for credible empty spaces. And as these are places designed for summer, it's easy to film there in winter. Everyone's available, the restaurants are closed, there are hardly any cars, everything's simple

it's a sort of open-air film set. But we shot in March, and I was really worried that the winter wouldn't come across on screen. Everything changes very quickly, and we didn't get the same light or the torrential rain we'd had during location scouting. So I made sure to have enough wide shots to show the deserted city and filmed the beach scenes with a short focal length to bring that emptiness to life. That winter feel was then refined during sound editing in post-production, by bringing to life the sounds of building sites and construction work, which are very characteristic of these places that are being rebuilt in winter.





You studied editing at La Fémis. Does this editor's perspective lead to greater efficiency in writing and directing?

It hasn't changed my writing, but it has certainly influenced my directing. For instance, I deliberately avoided long takes, because I knew I'd regret it later. I also started editing on set every weekend, which helped me stay on track as I could see the film taking shape. By editing on the spot, I was also able to shoot extra scenes, for instance when the cuts weren't working. We didn't dismantle the sets until I'd edited the sequence, as if we had a studio at our disposal, which was very reassuring.

This pattern of a polarised duo and solitudes that cancel each other out is common in cinema. Who were your influences, and how did you go beyond them to create a work that resonates with personal themes?

I've always loved those films by unlikely encounters and duos, particularly female ones. I've watched *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* over and over again, of course, but also *Bagdad Café*, about two women who manage to work together to overcome the anger they harbour within themselves. It's a film of immense beauty and great poetry about human relationships. I also really love *Harold and Maude*, which contains some very funny moments but also a great deal of violence.

I chose to write the story of a melancholic duo grappling with grief, a theme I've explored extensively in my short films. I lost my father at a very young age, and then my grandmother passed away whilst I was writing the film. I was an adult, so it was to be expected, but it completely devastated me and truly took me out of childhood. The message on the answering machine that Charlie hears is, in fact, the last one my grandmother left me before she died, in 2017. I arrived at the meeting she'd arranged and found her dead, just like in the film's opening scene. I really love that message because when she wishes me every success in whatever I undertake, it feels as though she's saying goodbye to me. It was very important to me that we heard my grandmother's voice. Originally, it was a funnier, lighter film that took on a melancholy tone I hadn't expected. That melancholy suits it well and has allowed me to turn a page in my process of grieving, so I can explore something else in my next film.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE DIRECTOR



AVRIL BESSON graduated from the editing department at La Fémis in 2013. She directed her graduation film, *ADELA*, which was screened at several festivals in France and abroad. She then worked as an editor on numerous projects (feature films, short films, series and documentaries). Her latest short film, *QUEEN SIZE*, has been selected for over 35 international festivals and was nominated for the César Award for Best Short Film.

FILMOGRAPHIE

MARVELOUS MORNINGS (Feature Film, 2026)
QUEEN SIZE (Short Film, 2023)
MÈRE AGITÉE (TV pilot, 26' – La Fémis / TV series workshop)
OUPS (2014, short film)
ADELA (doc, short film, 2013)
BERNARD & FILS, SUICIDEURS À DOMICILE (short film, 2011)





CAST AND CREW

Charlie.....INDIA HAIR
Marina.....RAYA MARTIGNY
Titou.....ÉRIC CANTONA
Maxime.....MATHIAS MINNE
Pauline.....FANNY SIDNEY

TECHNICAL TEAM

Director.....AVRIL BESSON
Screenplay.....AVRIL BESSON
PAULINE BADUEL
in collaboration with.....FANNY SIDNEY
1st Assistant Director.....LÉOLO VICTOR-PUJEBET
Cinematography.....JULIA MINGO
Production Design.....LIVIA LATTANZIO
Costumes.....CAMILA NORIEGA-BRAVO
Production Manager.....ELSA BOUTAULT-CARADEC
Editing.....AVRIL BESSON
Sound.....TRISTAN PONTECAILLE
Sound Editing.....SAOUSSEN TATAH
Mixing.....ANGE HUBERT
Original Music.....THOMAS KRAMEYER
Produced by.....CHRISTOPHE AUDEGUIS
LIONEL GUEDJ
DAVID NIVESSE
DOMINIQUE MARZOTTO
with VINCENT BRANÇON
Co-produced by.....ROBIN ROBLES
BASTIEN DARET
ARTHUR GOISSET MOHAMED
Production.....TO BE CONTINUED
Co-production.....TOPSHOT FILMS
In association with.....BERNARD GARCIA, SYBIL AND
NAGUIB BOUDJELLAL, THE PROJECT
In association with.....CINÉMAGE 13 DEVELOPMENT
With the support of the PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR
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AND THE MOVING IMAGE and ANGOA.
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