



&

RED ENVELOPE ENTERTAINMENT

PRESENT

BLAME IT ON FIDEL

(La Faute à Fidel)

A Film by Julie Gavras

Starring

Julie Depardieu

Stefano Accorsi

Nina Kervel

Production Notes

35mm color 99 minutes 1:85 Dolby digital

In French with English subtitles

Press Materials: www.kochlorberfilms.com

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SYNOPSIS

Anna (played by newcomer NINA KERVEL) is nine years old. For her, life is simple, structured by order and routine. Her life is peaceful and comfortable, spent mostly in Paris. She attends a Catholic school and lives at home with her parents, Marie (JULIE DEPARDIEU) and Fernando (STEFANO ACCORSI), her younger brother François (BENJAMIN FEUILLET), and her nanny. She sometimes goes to Bordeaux, where her mother's wealthy parents have a vineyard. The only dark cloud in this ideal childhood portrait is an uncle who lives in Spain, where he is fighting against Franco. He is a communist. The family never speaks of him.

“Communist,” “Pro-Franco” – words and commitments which are laden with meaning in 1970. And Anna is about to turn nine in 1970.

Soon, her well-ordered existence is going to get complicated. Her uncle gets arrested... a trip to Chile... meetings with strange people – events the importance of which Anna cannot grasp, but which are going to transform the lives of her parents deeply.

Political commitment, altruism, the fight against imperialism, feminism, elections, demonstrations – keywords that from now on punctuate the lives of Marie and Fernando. For Anna, her parents' newfound fervor finds expression in other words and events: changing nannies, moving to a smaller apartment, encountering new faces. So she resists and fights back with the few weapons at her disposal.

But the upheavals she is forced to undergo are too enormous. Her parents change inexorably. The new people she meets mark her profoundly. Her apprehension of the world grows deeper. Like her parents, Anna also changes, but in a different way. Anna grows up and accepts this new world, all the while looking at what surrounds her in her own personal way.

“Blame It on Fidel” was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize (World Cinema division) at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES – JULIE GAVRAS

9 year-old Anna lives in a comfortable middle-class family entrenched in a well-ordered routine. During the school year that spans 1970 to 1971, her father's sister arrives at their house. She has very firm political convictions. Anna's father feels a great deal of guilt and emptiness concerning his own life. He opts for a radical change.

All children are conservative, but Anna particularly so. "Blame It on Fidel" recounts how Anna survives the ordeal of her parents' newfound militancy.

Anna is often in the foreground, with things going on behind her. We know that she hears them, but we don't know what exactly she makes of them. We, as adult movie-goers, obviously understand a lot more than she does. In any case, we understand what she doesn't understand. In fact, we witness a little girl observing the world around her and what she is forced to undergo.

The other character in the film who makes a great leap forward is Anna's mother. Although we may consider her political commitment somewhat trivial, it is commensurate with her own capabilities. Social change is the true legacy of the era in question, and especially the change in the plight of women. It is important to tell a story of a girl growing up during those years.

Above all, Anna learns – contrary, I think, to what most children believe – that nothing is sure. This is certainly what is most difficult in the transition from childhood to adulthood: the awareness that there is no longer such a thing as a sense of absolute security about anything. At one point Anna says: "Is there anyone who knows anything for sure?" The choice of Benjamin Feuillet (for François) was virtually made on the spur of the moment. For this reason, during the shoot, I was much more nervous about him than about Nina. The choice of Nina Kervel for Anna was made carefully and rationally. We took a lot of time to decide on her. With Benjamin it all happened very fast. We did two screen-tests with him, and since he lived far away, I didn't make him come back for more.

During the first few days of the shoot I kept wondering "Is it a good idea to do things like this, on the spur of the moment?" In fact, it was. With Nina, we had time to think things over, because over the course of six months we saw 400 to 500 girls, only to narrow them down to two. It's true that Nina was incredibly natural during her first screen test, but I was scared to make too a hasty decision, so I kept pushing it off as long as possible. It's not as if I really decided to direct the children. At a certain point it comes spontaneously and you just go along with it. They act in their own special way.

With just two weeks of shooting left, Nina still thought she could be replaced by another little girl and, as far as I was concerned, it was fine for her to think that – it was actually good for her performance. For the earlier two or three weeks, she started behaving like a child star. I thought it was very important if we could make it to the end of the shoot by letting her believe that we could still make the movie with someone else. We would have succeeded in giving her the impression that we were not making her the center of the world.

If Nina had always understood the story, we might have lost a certain lightness of touch in her acting. So she learned each scene just before we shot it, one after another. She understood the growth of the character, because the movie is about change and about feeling betrayed by your parents.

Making a movie on the 1970s and their legacy is a major challenge. It's an era that now, thirty years later, has become fashionable either to sanctify (so it appears hallowed) or to mock (so it seems demonized). The decade has been analyzed, criticized, dissected, mythologized. It has often been recounted by those who took active roles during it. They were from 18 to 30 at the time. Former militants deprived these days of grand causes, berating the lifelessness of today's generation.

Domitilla Calamai's novel, "Tutta colpa di Fidel," tells the 1970s from the point of view of a little girl who is forced to undergo them. This is its great originality. No historical or ideological truth is imposed, simply that of a 9 year-old who sees her comfortable middle-class existence turned upside down by her parents' political militancy.

The novel recounts the effects of the years of change on several generations: the one before the changes – the grandparents ; the one in the eye of the storm – the parents; and especially the one that has had to live with the legacy of these changes without having been able to participate at the time – the girl.

While adapting "Blame It on Fidel" to the screen, I needed to find a radical form of narration, in order to respect the originality of the novel: everything is seen from the girl's point of view. It is through nine-year-old Anna's eyes that we trace the events from 1970 to 1971.

This narrative choice puts the movie-goer in a special place: we watch a little girl watching the world around her. We don't know what she makes of it, but as adults with a certain historical distance, we often understand more than Anna does. And sometimes even after the fact: by seeing how Anna reacts, we understand how she misunderstands.

This leads to strange confrontations between what she thinks and what adults impose on her during that busy year. It allows us to play off the excesses on both poles of the story.

When the film begins, Anna thrives on rules, order and all the reassuring rituals that punctuate the everyday life of a middle-class child. She resists the new, wilder life that her parents offer her. Their sudden, excessive political militancy clashes with her conservative desire to maintain the status quo. She keeps trying to burst their bubble, always picking out the weaknesses and incoherencies of their arguments in an unintentionally funny way. This is the structure upon which the character of Anna has been built, and the same can be said of the film itself. Anna, the little French girl in the film, and Ottavia, the little Italian girl in the book, can be any little girl in any country during those years of social change.

CREDITS

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|----------------------|---|
| Director / Writer | Julie Gavras |
| Producer | Sylvie Pialat |
| Executive Producer | Mathieu Bompont |
| Co-Producer (Italy) | Fabio Conversi. |
| Based on the novel | "Tutta Colpa di Fidel" by Domitilla Calamai |
| Script Collaborators | Arnaud Cathrine, Jacques Fieschi, Olivier Dazat |
| Camera | Nathalie Durand |
| Editor | Pauline Dairou |
| Music | Armand Amar |
| Production Designer | Laurent Deroo |
| Costume Designer | Annie Thiellement |
| Sound (Dolby) | Nicolas Naegelen |
| Assistant Director | Alain Artur |
| Casting | Coralie Amedeo |

CAST

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|-------------|-------------------------|
| Marie | Julie Depardieu |
| Fernando | Stefano Accorsi |
| Anna | Nina Kervel |
| François | Benjamin Feuillet |
| Grandfather | Olivier Perrier |
| Grandmother | Martine Chevallier |
| Suzanne | Lucienne Hamon |
| Marga | Mar Sodupe |
| Pilar | Raphaëlle Molinier |
| Cécile | Gabrielle Vallières |
| Sister | Geneviève Carole Franck |
| Isabelle | Marie Kremer |
| Emilio | Francisco Lopez Ballo |

BIOGRAPHIES

JULIE GAVRAS – Director/Writer

After graduate studies in literature and law, Julie Gavras turned to cinema. She is the daughter of famed director/writer Constantin Costa-Gavras (“Missing,” “Z,” “State of Siege,” “Music Box”).

Gavras started as an assistant director in Italy and France on commercials, television movies and feature films. She worked with directors as diverse as Robert Enrico, Claire Devers, Jacques Nolot, Alexandre Jardin, Camille de Casabianca, Roberto Faenza and Michele Soavi. She also worked with her father on his 2002 World War II drama “Amen,” on which she served as an assistant director.

In 1998, she directed a short film called “Oh les beaux dimanches!” produced in Marseilles by Comic Strip. Two years later, she directed her first documentary, “From Dawn to Night: Songs by Moroccan Women.” It was based on a play by Alain Weber mounted at the Bouffes du Nord theater in Paris during the Festival d’Automne. It was broadcast on Arte. In January 2002, her second documentary was released theatrically in France: “The Pirate, the Wizard, the Thief and the Children.” It looks at a class of nine-year-olds who make a film at school. She has directed other documentaries for Arte and France 5.

“Blame It on Fidel” is her first narrative feature film.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

NINA KERVEL (Anna)

“Blame it on Fidel” is Nina Kervel’s film debut.

JULIE DEPARDIEU (Marie)

Born into a family of actors (her father is Gérard Depardieu), Julie Depardieu studied philosophy and then went on to a number of small jobs in the movie business. In 1994, she made her film debut alongside her father in “Colonel Chabert.” She also appeared with her father in the film “La Machine” and the French TV mini-series “The Count of Monte Cristo.” Director Danièle Dubroux offered Julie her first leading film role in “Midnight Exam” in 1998 and they worked together again on “Eros Therapy” in 2004.

Like her actor brother Guillaume, Julie Depardieu has become, thanks to her appearance in films by Olivier Assayas, Cédric Klapisch, Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Laetitia Masson, one of the most familiar and attractive young actresses in French cinema. In 2004, roles in two features revealed her true talents: as Benoît Poelvoorde’s wife in “Podium” by Yann Moix, and as the spellbound lover in “Little Lili” by Claude Miller. Julie won both the Most Promising and Best Supporting Cesar Award the same year.

Recently, Julie worked with André Téchiné on “Les Témoins” and has also worked on a number of films by young directors including “Blame it on Fidel,” “You and Me,” “Le Passager” and “Burnt Out.” She has a featured role in New Line’s “Rush Hour 3” starring Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker, opening in August 2007.

Selective Filmography:

A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT (UN LONG DIMANCHE DE FIANCAILLES)

directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet

PODIUM

directed by Yann Moix

LITTLE LILI (LA PETITE LILI)

directed by Claude Miller

SENTIMENTAL DESTINIES (LES DESTINEES SENTIMENTALES)

Directed by Olivier Assayas

COLONEL CHABERT (LE COLONEL CHABERT)

directed by Yves Angelo

STEFANO ACCORSI (Fernando)

Stefano Accorsi was born in Italy and graduated from the Theatrical School of Bologna in 1993. He acted in the theater for several years before turning to movies. In 1996 he played the lead in "Jack Frusciante è uscito dal gruppo," one of his best-known films in Europe. In 1998 he worked with Daniele Luchetti in "I Piccoli Maestri," which competed for the Golden Lion at the Venice International Film Festival. In the same year he won three prizes for his role in "Radiofreccia," directed by Italian rock star Luciano Ligabue. He is best known in the U.S. as the protagonist of the successful Italian film "L'ultimo bacio" by Gabriele Muccino. It was remade in 2006 as the English-language romance "The Last Kiss" starring Zach Braff and Jacinda Barrett.

Stefano won the leading role in actress/director Maria de Medeiros' "Capitaines d'Avril" and worked with director Nanni Moretti in "The Son's Room." In 2001, he also had the lead role in Ferzan Ozpetek's "Le fate ignoranti" (His Secret Life), which was in competition at the Berlin International Film Festival and which garnered him three awards for his performance. His next major role was in "Un viaggio chiamato amore" (A Journey Called Love) which took part in the 2002 Venice International Film Festival and for which he won the Coppa Volpi, the award for best male performance as the Italian poet Dino Campana.

His other credits include 2004's "Ovunque sei," directed by Michele Placido, and "L'amore ritrovato," directed by Carlo Mazzacurati. He recently completed the French film "Entre Femme et loup" with model/actress Laetitia Casta, with whom he has a son born in September 2006.

Selective Filmography:

TIGER'S BRIGADES (LES BRIGADES DU TIGRE)

directed by Jerome Corneau

CRIME NOVEL (ROMANZO CRIMINALE)

directed by Michele Placido

THE SON'S ROOM (LA STANZA DEL FIGLIO)

directed by Nanni Moretti

THE LAST KISS (L'ULTIMO BACIO)

directed by Gabriele Muccino