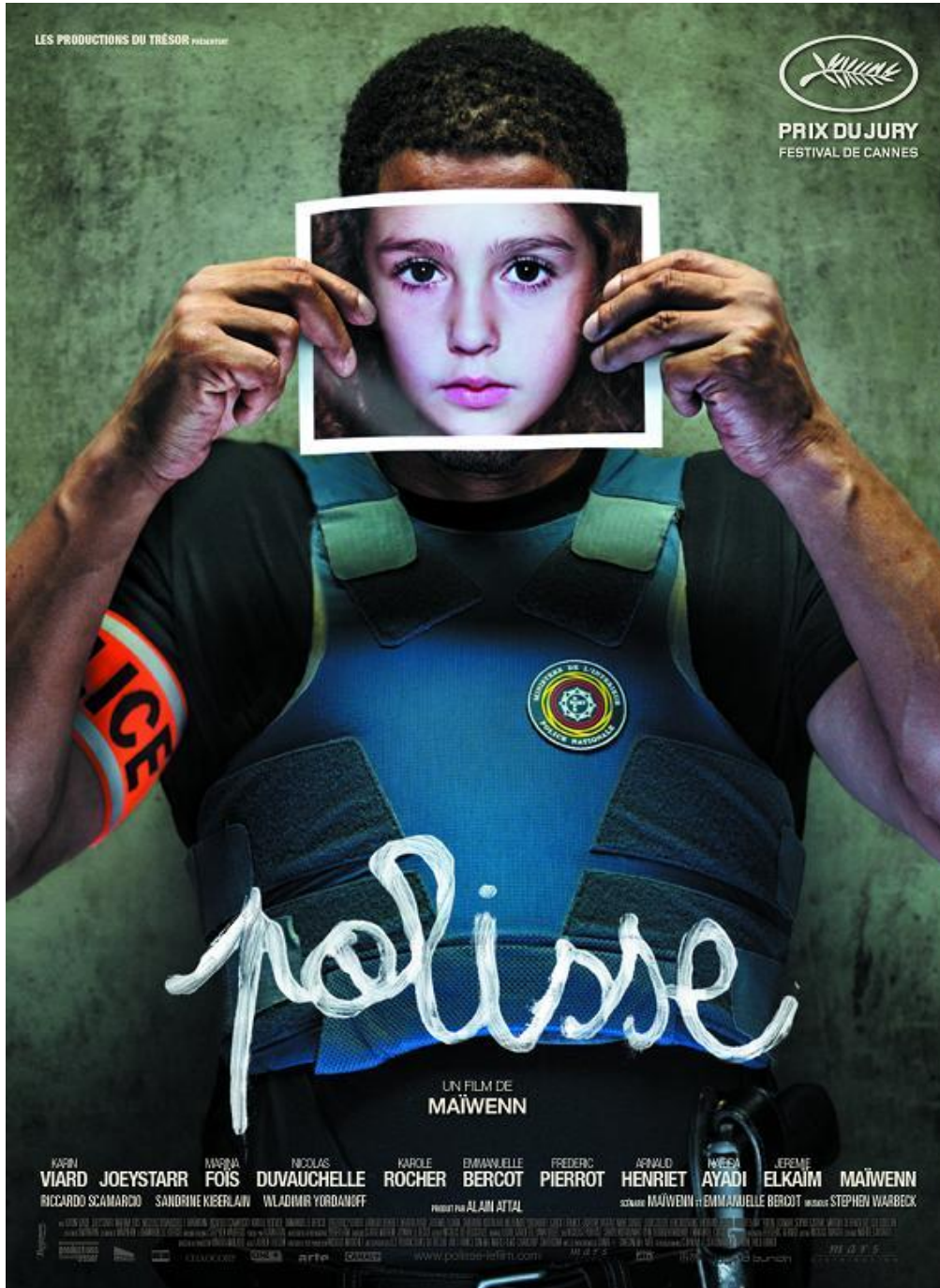


# PERSMAP



# POLISSE

Een film van Maïwenn

*POLISSE laat het dagelijkse leven zien van een groep politieagenten die werkzaam zijn bij het Zedenteam van de Parijse politie.*

*Een zootje ongeregeld dat elke dienst weer, met zeer beperkte middelen, vecht tegen opgeschoten crimineeltjes, pedofiele smeerlappen en fantasten, maar ook de macho, bureaucratische pikorde bij het korps. Hun chef doet zijn best, maar 'Narcotica' gaat áltijd voor. Voor de gedreven agenten is het niet makkelijk om thuis hun werk bespreekbaar te maken. Fred kent dat probleem maar al te goed. Zeker wanneer hij naast al het gedoe op het bureau ook nog verliefd wordt op Melissa , een fotografe die in opdracht van het Ministerie meeloopt met het team. Rauwe, confronterende maar ook droogkomische speelfilm die in documentaire stijl is opgenomen.*

Speelduur: 134 min. - Land: Frankrijk - Jaar: 2011 - Genre: Drama



In Competitie - Cannes Film Festival 2011  
Winnaar Jury Prize - Cannes Film Festival 2011

Release datum: 5 januari 2012

Distributie: Cinéart

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Sue Ellen  
Balloo  
Bamako  
Nora  
Gabriel  
Francesco  
Mrs. de la Faublaise  
Beauchard  
Mr. de la Faublaise  
Céline  
Hervé  
Alice  
Alex  
Disgraced mother  
Franck  
Drug-addicted mother  
P.E. teacher  
Sister Melissa

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## CREW

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DIRECTED BY  
WRITTEN BY  
ORIGINAL SCORE  
PRODUCED BY  
DP  
CAMERA  
  
PRODUCTION DESIGNER  
EDITORS  
  
SOUND  
  
1<sup>ST</sup> ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
CASTING BY  
COSTUME DESIGNER  
PRODUCTION MANAGER  
UNIT PRODUCTION MANAGER  
POST-PRODUCTION MANAGER

Maiwenn  
Maiwenn and Emmanuelle Bercot  
Stephen Warbeck  
Alain Attal  
Pierre Aïm  
Claire Mathon  
Jowan Le Besco  
Nicolas de Boiscuille  
Laure Gardette  
Yann Dedet  
Nicolas Provost  
Sandy Notarianni  
Rym Debbarih-Mounir  
Emmanuel Croset  
Frédéric Gérard  
Nicolas Ronchi  
Marité Coutard  
Xavier Amblard  
Laurent Rizzon  
Nicolas Mouchet

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## INTERVIEW WITH MAÏWENN - DIRECTOR

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## **How did you come up with the idea of making a film about the Child Protection Unit?**

I happened to see a TV documentary on the Child Protection Unit and was deeply moved. The next day I immediately called the TV channel and said I wished to contact the documentary director - I wanted to know how to meet up with the Child Protection Unit (CPU) police officers.



### **That was the next step, wasn't it?**

Before I could be sure I really wanted to write a script on the CPU, I felt I needed to get to know the lives of these police officers. I wanted to spend time with them, to listen to them and watch them live. It was a long, hard slog. But once I was eventually allowed my sort of "internship" I kept going from one group to the other. I was taking notes, I was like a sponge absorbing all the info I could get. Even during the three-hour lunch break or after hours when they had a drink I would tag along so as not to miss any of their discussions and I'd ask thousands of questions.

### **How much did the time you spent with them inspire the screenplay?**

What I wrote was based only on stories I had actually witnessed or on stories the officers told me. I changed a few things about some of the cases but I didn't invent any of them. I got to know precisely what these police officers did on a daily basis, and I didn't want to skip any of their everyday duties: I wanted to mention paedophiles, incest in an upper-class family, the teenage environment etc... On the other hand I found it important to show that when police officers deal with a case they follow it as long as the defendant is in custody but they are not necessarily informed of the verdict. They need to deal with one case after another very quickly in order not to be emotionally involved in any of them. So I was determined not to let the viewer know what becomes of the defendants, because police officers don't know what happens to them either.

### **What was it like writing the script with Emmanuelle Bercot?**

To begin with, I wrote the first draft on my own and then Emmanuelle Bercot joined me. In the beginning she intended to work with me for only a short time. We are very good friends and she was afraid that working together might affect our relationship, but I didn't agree with her. I was pretty sure our collaboration would strengthen our friendship and our work would benefit from it.

So she told me: "I'll work with you for about ten days, but no more. It will give us time to define the characters clearly and then you are in charge of the dialogue, I won't interfere." Ten days later, she was still with me, we had an office in the production offices and we would work almost every day, from 9am on. As the days and the weeks went by, we started talking about the structure of the narrative, we re-worked it together, then we tackled the dialogue. It came quite naturally. She kept on refusing to write, but she would come up with dialogue lines and I was the one typing. Then one day, she said: "OK, I feel this scene is fine, I'll write the dialogue." And she sat at the computer. I was extremely touched to see that, after a few months she had adopted the script, it had become 'our' script.

I must say that in the first draft, even if you find it hard to believe, the police officers turn into rogue cops, do a hold-up and then head to Las Vegas to spend the money! It was Alain Attal who made me change my mind. Anyway, the budget wouldn't have allowed me to shoot in Las Vegas.

So I'd say that collaborating with Emmanuelle Bercot was extremely enriching. I think that we are complementary. She brought a lot of 'realism' to our work and her pet phrase was "It sounds real." I, on the other

hand, kept trying to add a touch of humour because that was what struck me when I arrived at the CPU: I realised that humour was their only weapon against human misery.

**There's a strong sense of camaraderie between police officers...**

What interested me was that the unit almost looks like a family unit: the officers are together from morning till evening, they even have breakfast and after hours' drinks together!

Sometimes, however, their relationships do grow tense because there's a lot of rivalries and love affairs going on... You have to bear in mind that many CPU officers are women and they have something to prove, unlike their male counterparts.

**You've also addressed the various forms of cowardice on the part of highranking officers when dealing with an influential defendant.**

Yes indeed. This story happened less than ten years ago and it was the officers themselves who told me about it. It was the case of a man in a high position of power. He had been raping his daughter for several years and yet he got away with his crime thanks to his status and his connections. Even if the chief superintendent insisted that this sort of injustice was a thing of the past and wouldn't happen nowadays, it wouldn't be true to say that all defendants are treated equally.

**It's a very character-driven film. How did you come up with the characters?**

Unlike the cases which are real, the characters are mostly fictional. Emmanuelle Bercot and I wrote a sort of 'bible' for each protagonist with biographical elements and personality features as well as details on the relationships and rivalries between the unit members. Even though you don't find all of this information in the film, it helped some of the actors who consulted the 'bible' during the shoot.

**You've also addressed the fact that the CPU and other police departments have a hard time getting along.**

Yes. CPU officers are often looked down on by the other police departments! Besides, they are nicknamed the "Baby Unit." It is preposterous that the Drugs Squad has more resources - even if it performs a crucial role - than the department whose job it is to protect children and teenagers in Paris! A baby has been shaken violently? They are in charge of the case. A teenager has committed suicide? They are in charge. A child has run away? It's them again. Let me add one small detail: the Child Protection Unit only deals with under-age victims. If an under-age person commits a felony against an adult, he or she is sent to the department specialising in this type of felony. But sometimes kids think they are culprits whereas in fact they are just victims: this is the case with subway pickpockets. They are exploited minors, therefore victims and it's the CPU's task to catch those who exploit them. What makes their job particularly hard is that those who exploit them are... their families.

Consequently they spend their time catching either the parents or a brother, an uncle, a teacher... This is what makes their job so complex: they have to explain to the judges that the incest, the rape, or the abuse took place inside the family and that it was not committed violently. Violence can be silent... it's the worst sort of violence, I think. Inaudible violence.

**You go from heartrending to funny scenes.**

I think it's important to be able to make fun of horrible events because otherwise life is not bearable. And as I have already said, it's the only way for policemen to keep alive.

**In this environment, police officers seem to let their work affect their relationships with their kids. Is that inevitable?**

Exactly, this is what I have noticed. There is a sort of mirror effect between the professional lives of these cops and their private lives. For instance I remember a policeman telling me that since he had been working with the CPU he hadn't been able to tickle his own daughter. So every gesture is carefully chosen, measured and thought out - too carefully, in my opinion. That's what we see when Joeystarr gives his daughter a bath.

### **Can you talk about the camerawork?**

In my opinion, the most important thing is that the camera must be as unobtrusive as possible. It must focus on the actors and not the other way around. I absolutely wanted the actors to forget about the camera. But I don't have any special way of reaching this goal. I adjust to each actor, each situation, and I have to handle every challenge for the camerawork to be as inconspicuous as possible.

Most of the time we used two digital cameras, sometimes three, because the sets were quite tiny. I asked my camera people, Pierre Aïm, Claire Mathon and Jowan Le Besco to 'feel' the emotions and live with the actors. They had to be both very unassuming and good listeners at the same time. Claire Mathon, with whom I have already made three movies, is like an animal: I hardly ever need to talk to her. As for Jowan, he constantly takes instant shots, I love it. Pierre Aïm was in charge of the lighting. The three of them were equally important. I know that on a classical set the cameraman is very close to the director, but that isn't my way of handling things. Those who hold the camera must be like animals and I wanted the four of us to be tightly linked. Moreover the lighting does come first for me. What really matters is to capture moments of truth, and to be able to do so you must be listening to everything around you and be ready to shoot it instantly, and that's what we did.

### **Are there any movies that inspired you?**

Yes, first of all I think that I watched every cop film, be it French or foreign... Even Alain Delon, when he played the cop. But I really found my inspiration in Virgil Vernier's documentaries on the police. They show the point of view of a real film director on what life is really like. Generally speaking, a bad documentary is a better source of inspiration for me than a very good feature film. I'm not a film buff, I'm trying to become one, but I must say that my knowledge doesn't really help me to write. What I personally find overwhelming and makes me feel like writing is when I know that the story actually happened. What keeps me going is real-life events.

### **Why did you cast Joeystarr as a police officer?**

Even before I knew I was going to shoot a film on the CPU I wanted him to have the leading role in my new film and I intended to make a movie about a love story between two characters from completely opposite backgrounds. That was one of the basic ingredients but I wasn't sure how I could exploit it: when I came across the TV documentary on the CPU, I knew exactly which part I was going to give him. I wrote this film for him, he was my driving force and my source of inspiration. What's more, I wanted to surprise him and to make him proud of me. Plus I felt I had not made good use of his potential in THE ACTRESS' BALL, and I wanted to go even deeper and access his innermost frailty and modesty.

### **What was the casting process like? Did you feel like working again with several cast members from THE ACTRESS' BALL?**

Working with certain actors doesn't necessarily mean casting them again. I'm not much of a family person when it comes to casting. All I focus on is the film and the characters. There are actors who were very close to me and whom I did not cast again and I hope they don't think that it's a matter of preference or affinity. I mainly chose actors who would be credible playing cops. In my opinion all of them had to have a common feature - they had to look like working class people and speak in vernacular Parisian French.

### **How did the actors transform into their characters?**

They all did an workshop, not inside the CPU because the superintendent had told me that it wouldn't be possible. So I hired two cops who were former CPU officers and the cast learnt about the trade for a whole week, working eight hours a day. Every day they would watch documentaries on incest and all sorts of police stuff: drug trafficking, petty and organised crime, etc... My intention was to feed their unconscious minds. Little by little the mere fact of being immersed in this atmosphere made them copy the humour and the vernacular of cops. Making believe that a group has long been working together is no easy task. This was also the aim of the workshop.

### **Were you with them while they trained for the film?**

Yes, because I had many more things to learn. And throughout the film making from pre-production to editing, I kept learning. I tried to get an in-depth grasp of how the CPU operated. Besides, I kept wondering - anxiously - if I was credible. I felt very comfortable dealing with the topic of my first two movies, but I felt I took risks with POLISSE because I didn't have full mastery of my characters' occupation. This accounts for the presence of police officers during the entire shoot. They helped me straighten things out when the situation didn't seem credible to them.

### **Editing...**

I was lucky to be working with fantastic editors, like Laure Gardette, who has been with me since I started out, Yann Dedet, who gave us a hand and Loïc Lallemand as assistant editor. We shot 150 hours of rushes... We then worked in three editing rooms for three months. I had to adjust to the three of them because each had his or her own working methods. It was hard even if it was enriching to work quickly. As soon as I had the first cut, I only worked with Laure because I needed to rely on one person for advice. The first cut lasted 3hr 20. When I saw Alain Attal's face during the screening, I immediately took a new turn with Laure. Alain is as voluble when he thinks it's good as when he thinks it's bad. Sometimes he told me: "It stinks, dump it right away!" Then he'd say: "It's brilliant! If you cut this scene, I'll kill you!". His enthusiasm and lack thereof were very supportive. The same goes for Philippe Lefebvre who introduced me to Productions du Trésor and who helped me a lot even during the writing period.

### **Why did you want to work with composer Stephen Warbeck?**

He wrote the score for Nicole Garcia's A VIEW OF LOVE which I liked very much.

I wanted to find the same Oriental, 'ethnic' and ethereal tonalities as in his score, but without too much emphasis on the emotions.

### **Why did you call the film POLISSE and not POLICE?**

To begin with, the title should have been POLICE but there was already a film with this title, and it was quite a film! Then I thought about YOU'RE FROM THE POLICE? But I realised this title had also been used some years ago. And then, one day, as my son was doing writing exercises the title POLISSE, with a spelling mistake and childish handwriting struck me as obvious for the film subject. I think it's important to be able to make fun of horrible events because otherwise life is not bearable. (...) it's the only way for policemen to keep alive.



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## **MAÏWENN FILMOGRAFIE**



## **DIRECTOR**

### **2011 POLISSE**

With Karin Viard, Joeystarr, Marina Foïs, Nicolas Duvauchelle, Karole Rocher  
64<sup>th</sup> Cannes Film Festival, Official Selection

### **2009 THE ACTRESS' BALL**

With Jeanne Balibar, Marina Foïs, Charlotte Rampling, Romane Bohringer, Estelle Lefebure, Murielle Robin, Julie Depardieu, Karole Rocher, Mélanie Doutey, Karin Viard, Joeystarr

César Nomination for Joeystarr, Best Supporting Actor

### **2006 FORGIVE ME**

With Pascal Grégory, Hélène de Fougerolles, Mélanie Thierry, Aurélien Recoing, Marie-France Pisier, Marie Sophie L., Yannick Soulier

César Nominations for Maïwenn, Most Promising Actress, Best First Work

## **ACTRESS**

**2011 POLISS** by Maïwenn

**2009 THE ACTRESS' BALL** by Maïwenn

**2006 FORGIVE ME** by Maïwenn

**2005 LE COURAGE D'AIMER** by Claude Lelouch

**2004 LES PARISIENS** by Claude Lelouch

**2003 HIGH TENSION** by Alexandre Aja

**1996 THE FIFTH ELEMENT** by Luc Besson

**1991 LA GAMINE** by Hervé Palud

**1990 THE ELEGANT CRIMINAL** by Francis Girod

**1983 ONE DEADLY SUMMER** by Jean Becker

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## **INTERVIEW WITH EMMANUELLE BERCOT - ACTRICE**

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### **How did you get involved in the film?**

I had met Maïwenn on several occasions but didn't know her very well. Then we crossed paths at a film festival and we exchanged ideas and wove stronger ties. One day she told me she intended to make a movie about the police, with a large number of protagonists. She knew that I had personally written an ensemble piece with a lot of characters and said she was unable to get ahead with her own work because she was not methodical enough. She gave me about thirty pages to read: even if the character arcs were incomplete, a certain number of characters were already outlined, but the script was teeming with details and therefore a bit messy. I explained to her how I had been using a structured, concrete style to put in place parallel character arcs. A few months later she wrote the first draft.



### **Were you personally interested in the realm of the Child Protection Unit?**

Yes I was fascinated. Not only have I always loved cop movies but in this story there are children involved and I am particularly moved by stories about them. Anyway, had I not been totally fascinated I wouldn't have accepted to work on the project. On the other hand, Maïwenn did a lot of research, which was not the case with me. But as she has a remarkable sense of sharing, she performed the scenes she had witnessed for me and was able to convey all the emotions she had felt in the course of her research. Consequently it was as if I had been with her during her investigation. It helped me feel immersed in an environment it was essential to express accurately and truthfully.

### **You write and direct movies on your own terms. Did you find it difficult immersing yourself in the world of another director?**

I started writing for Claude Miller ten years ago, when he was making LITTLE LILI. But as I was busy with something else I stopped mid-way and so I have never done this before. I must admit it's a difficult exercise and I was a little scared to begin with. As far as my own films go, I find the work on structure and narrative quite tedious, so when she asked me to co-write the script I was reluctant. Then I told her that I was willing to help but I was not going to participate in the narrative. So she asked me to develop the scenes of the cops' private lives. I first agreed to help for the sake of friendship, it was going to be just for a week, and there would be no contract. In fact as time went by, we talked about the structure, then about the characters, then the storyline. And finally there I was, writing the script with her - after her first draft - and therefore I got more involved than I had expected.

### **What about the dialogue?**

As I was aware of Maïwenn's method from her previous films, I thought it would be no use working hard on dialogue because it would all blow up during the shoot. But personally I am a strong believer in dialogue, in the search for the right word. I believe in giving each character the right tone and lines. Maïwenn is a very talented dialogue writer. I remember telling her that she didn't need anyone to write the dialogue and that her style is so personal that nobody can replace her. And yet, although some dialogue from the first draft hasn't been changed, especially the interrogation sequences, which were inspired by actual events, I did contribute: we would write it and then read it aloud. I must say that we didn't write the entire dialogue because during the shoot, Maïwenn gives the actors free rein to improvise, so they are the authors of some of it.

### **How collaborative was working with Maïwenn?**

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The first draft was very long; she had jotted down all her ideas. It was dense and compact, you couldn't make head or tail of it, but there was a powerful storyline and many life-like characters. And above all there was the subject matter she wanted to address. So before getting into the details of the scenes, we had to select stuff, cut, alter or re-organise some, complete character arcs, eliminate certain characters and invent others, etc. Our method consisted of spending time together, in an office from morning till evening. Most of the time, it was Maiwenn who typed what we came up with. We wrote only a very few scenes separately. In this sense you can say that it was a collaborative effort. I learnt a lot working with her, and generally speaking I have difficulty writing on the spur of the moment. She and I would bring up a scene, discuss what she wanted to say and write as we talked. Maiwenn actually acted out the scenes, which was very helpful because we could see immediately what didn't work. What we wrote was never final. Maiwenn does not regard her writing as sacred. Things change all the time and her method is very alive. What was really exciting was that the more I had to rephrase my ideas to convey them to Maiwenn, the better I was able to analyse script writing mechanisms. I have learnt a lot thanks to this collaboration.

### **Can you tell me more precisely how you helped her?**

Maiwenn has one quality that can be perceived at each stage of creation - her freedom and total indifference to rules and conventions. But she doesn't have an academic education and she is not overly methodical and organized. Unlike her, I am very methodical, the good student type... though I don't take much pride in it. Therefore I tried to help her to be more disciplined and rigorous, which is essential if you want to write a good story. By the way, she often called me "Teach"!

### **Can you be a little more specific?**

It's very hard to sum up work on a script because the process is complex and you have to be careful about every single detail. I would point out what such and such a choice meant for the rest of the narrative. Or see to it that no scene would lack realism, credibility or truth. For instance, Maiwenn wanted an action scene to have stamina: the first draft contained the case, drawn from real life, of a wealthy man who got away with incest against his daughter. In this story, the cop character, played by Joestarr wasn't willing to let the case slip away from him and swore revenge on the man. As the man owned a jeweller's shop, the cop organised a hold-up in the shop etc... This situation didn't seem realistic and sounded contrived. So I told her that the scene had to go.

But Maiwenn would often allude to this action scene and her determination to bring forcefulness to it. My role was to listen to her and respond. One day, she told me that when she was at the police unit a cop had been looking for volunteers for an operation monitored by the Organised Crime Repression Unit: she explained that when there was a staff shortage they sought back-up from other departments. Most of the time, the Child Protection cops are ready to help because they like action and have too few opportunities to get it. I proposed to start from this premise to create the action scene. It allowed us to see the unit in action performing their duties, which also meant sticking to the subject matter. That's how it became the scene of the arrest of the Yugoslav gang.

### **Did you have to rewrite scenes?**

The difficulty in an ensemble piece lies in the organisation and overlapping of the character arcs. It's like the work of an architect. It was difficult to write the parallel stories of the professional and private lives of these police officers and the story of the two men in love with Melissa, played by Maiwenn. She would often say that she was not able to make up characters and could only write about her research, about her own life experience or what she had observed in other people's lives.

My role was to help her fulfil her wish to write fiction. Maiwenn's obsession is to write true-to-life scenes and she believes that it's only possible when actors improvise.

I tried to convince her that a well-written script is not an obstacle, far from it. One of her favorite films is FISH TANK. I often used this example to convince her that what sounded incredibly true and natural in the film had been carefully written and that the film was nonetheless highly realistic.

### **In the end, is it a tightly written script?**

Definitely. Maïwenn was not used to writing such structured, well-rounded material and dialogue, even if it serves as a work base. We had typed the whole script except when there were many characters. During the shoot, either the actors performed the text itself, and then went on improvising, or the text blew up and just a few bits and pieces remained. But at least Maïwenn could rely on a written text. She hadn't had written scripts in her previous films. By the way, her crew was surprised to see her holding a script. But even here she would whisper lines to the actors that she invented during the takes.

### **How did you develop the love story between Joeystarr's character and Maïwenn's?**

She insisted on mixing the story of the police unit with the love story, which accounts for nearly half the script. It was crucial for her to approach the female character, torn between an upper class husband and a cop who, like her, came from a working-class background. It took us a long time to think up the scenes in which Joeystarr, who plays the cop, manages to bring the girl back to her roots. She was a poor, young woman who grew up in Belleville, a working class Paris neighbourhood. She suddenly finds herself in a world that she does not identify with and the cop makes her realise who she really is. The challenge was that we couldn't lose sight of the life of the police unit and at the same time relate the love story, with its own development and conclusion. After this, we worked on the romance as if it was a story in its own right, and our aim was to make it credible on set. Of course it wasn't the easiest thing in the world.

### **Did you put much of yourself into the film, too?**

I love Maïwenn and I love what she does as an artist. It was great working with her. I think that film directors who write their own scripts are used to being the centre of attention. POLISSE was my first experience working for someone else and I tried to play ball. It taught me to be unassuming. I did not try to impose my ideas. Sometimes, I disagreed with Maïwenn, but the only thing that mattered was to be dedicated to her, to her film and to her story. Working hand in hand meant we had to look constantly for harmony and mutual understanding. In this way, I've probably put some of myself into the film. In any case I love it immensely.

### **Are there any films that influenced your writing?**

We only watched documentaries in order to study how the Child Protection Unit operates and how police officers speak even if each of us have our own references like Pialat's POLICE, Tavernier's L.627 or Xavier Beauvois' THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT. I think that we both like these films but we never brought them up. We mentioned others: for example, for her husband's character Maïwenn had in mind Yves Montand's performance in CÉSAR AND ROSALIE and I also remember a reference to Michael Mann's HEAT to help put together some scenes, but of course that film has nothing to do with POLISSE!

### **How important was it to appear in the film and portray one of the characters?**

We hadn't even considered this option to start with! Until three days before the script final draft, my character was supposed to be a man. And then, one morning Maïwenn told me that the character had become a woman called Pascale and that she was going to call the police superintendent after her former name - Balloo. So we reworked on the 'Pascale' character and it had not occurred to me that I was going to play the part. It was a good thing because I might have overdone it! It was only much later, once the script was completed, that Maïwenn offered me the part. Sometimes, I disagreed with Maïwenn, but the only thing that mattered was to be dedicated to her, to her film and to her story.

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## **INTERVIEW WITH ALAIN ATTAL - PRODUCER**

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### **How did you land the project?**

Philippe Lefebvre, my partner at Les Productions du Trésor, met Maïwenn at a screening two years ago and told her that we greatly appreciated her work. Some time later she contacted me about a project. When she came to see me, I remember that she had brought along a paper-board like in a boardroom. Every page was divided into two columns. On the left-hand column you could read the cops' private lives in red letters, and on the right-hand column the cops' professional lives and the cases they were in charge of were written in black letters. Maïwenn, who had spent several weeks at the Child Protection Unit, had the whole movie mapped out in her head and she recounted it from beginning to end. And when there were no more than a few script pages, I said OK! What she told me was so well structured in her mind and so exciting that she struck a chord with me. However I knew that the story had to be written more carefully than her previous movies even though she had told me that her scripts were mainly indicative and that the actual writing was essentially done during shooting and editing. She is a filmmaker driven by her instinct, always in quest of the truth.

### **What attracted you to the project?**

First of all, the subject matter was totally new and had never been approached in film. But most of all, I felt that she was quite possessed with the topic and therefore could make it into a film. When a talented filmmaker is eager to develop an idea I accept to help him or her out. That's what I find exciting about my job - helping a filmmaker develop subject matter that is close to his or her heart.

### **Weren't you reluctant to produce yet another movie on police work?**

It did cross my mind but Maïwenn talked about her project in a way that was so different from all the classical thrillers that I decided pretty quickly. Child protection policemen rarely draw their guns and they are more involved in social issues than in law-and-order enforcement. This is something new in French thrillers.

### **Was the film hard to put together?**

Very hard. From the beginning, I was pretty sure it was going to take Maïwenn a long time to shoot and edit because she pays great attention to texture, and shoots lots of dailies. Consequently at first the budget hovered around 6 million euros. But I couldn't put up the money because the traditional networks wouldn't endorse the project even if they admitted that it was a powerful script. I was lucky to convince Mars, Canal + and Arte and they allowed me to put the film together. In the final reckoning it cost a little less than 5 million euros, and my company took a big risk. I must say I'm not very good at making money when I embark on a project!

### **Did you get involved in the writing process?**

Although Maïwenn was reluctant at first, I asked her to write a more structured script than usual and to develop the arc of the characters and narrative, draft after draft, so that the storyline would be as close as possible to the story she wanted to tell. For example in the first draft Fred, played by Joeystarr, was so rebellious that he ended up being an outlaw. I thought it was a bit too conventional and suggested she re-write it. I must say she played ball and found these exchanges fruitful. And when she suggested hiring a co-writer I encouraged her to do so. My aim was to help her to become a more accomplished filmmaker without losing the modern aspect of her first two pieces but with a more structured and genre-related movie.

### **How challenging was the production process?**

The most difficult thing was to get permission from the DDASS (the regional social services department) to film children in such an environment. Actually, this institution's duty - quite legitimately - is to protect children by helping them to distance themselves from the roles they play. And in POLISS children play molested and abused characters. The DDASS was worried that these underage kids might not be emotionally equipped to separate fact from fiction and thus risk being traumatised. Consequently we handed the script over to them for scrutiny and Maiwenn cooperated and changed details to comply with their demands. She never balked at changing things in the script and never seemed outraged.

### **The film makes a strong political statement.**

Yes, but probably more so from my point of view than from the point of view of Maiwenn, who is a spontaneous filmmaker in constant search of the truth. As a producer I assume full responsibility for producing a film about people whose mission it is to serve their fellow citizens: as cops they must make sure those children are not abused, even if they have to intrude into people's private lives and barge into their homes. They are quiet super heroes who work behind the scenes for all of us.

### **Weren't you afraid to cast Joeystarr as a cop?**

We insisted on the entire cast looking credible, human and extremely sensitive. Who better than Joeystarr to play his part? In THE ACTRESS' BALL, Maiwenn had cast him as a hypersensitive deeply human character and had brought to light an unexpected aspect of his personality. In POLISS, Fred (Joeystarr's character) would like to solve every case of child abuse in France. He wants to bear the burden of all the pain by himself and finds it very hard to endure.

### **What was your reaction when you found out there were over 150 hours of dailies?**

Maiwenn had warned me that the edit would take a long time. However I wasn't too worried because I am convinced that movies already "exist" amidst the dailies but that they must be "found". And while I was watching the dailies for hours every day, I felt that there was something there, some magic behind the scenes captured, and I felt confident..

### **Stephen Warbeck, who wrote the score for POLISS, had already written the score for A VIEW OF LOVE, which you produced.**

After Nicole Garcia, Maiwenn is the second woman whose films I have produced. And even if they make very different films they harbour similar doubts and their approach to directing actors has much in common. Therefore I proposed to Maiwenn to come to a screening of A VIEW OF LOVE and when she discovered Stephen Warbeck's music she wanted to meet with him. At first she made it clear she wouldn't have any music, then she came round and realised that she would need at least some minimalist music, to illustrate the characters' feelings.

### **How important is the fact that film has been selected at the Cannes Film Festival?**

First of all I am very happy to be entering the official competition. I think that the Cannes Film Festival will put our film in the spotlight, which will give it international exposure. And I haven't heard of any French or foreign films raising this issue from the viewpoint of a task force. For some years now there has been an increasing public awareness and more people have been facing up to the issues of child abuse and paedophilia. I hope that POLISS will help continue raising people's awareness and help put child protection at the heart of our everyday concerns.

