



Her Name Is Sabine

(Elle s'appelle Sabine)

Directed by Sandrine Bonnaire



France/2007/in French/85 min.
Digital Video / 4:3 / Color / Dolby SR

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SYNOPSIS

A sensitive portrait of Sabine Bonnaire, a 38-year-old autistic woman, filmed by her closest sister. The film tells her story through personal footage filmed by the actress over a period of 25 years, and her life today in a suitable facility.

This documentary shows us an endearing personality, whose growth and many talents were crushed by an inadequate care structure. After a tragic five-year stay in a psychiatric hospital, Sabine found a new lease on life - even if these capacities remain altered - in a home in the Charente region. The film exposes the penury of specialized institutions and the dramatic consequences they can lead to.

FESTIVALS/AWARDS (Excerpt)

WINNER – FIPRESCI AWARD - CANNES FILM FESTIVAL (DIRECTOR'S FORTNIGHT) 2007

WINNER – SPECIAL JURY PRIZE AND AUDIENCE AWARD – FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU FILM FRANCOPHONE DE NAMUR, BELGIUM 2007

OFFICIAL SELECTION – CANNES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2007

OFFICIAL SELECTION – PUSAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2007

OFFICIAL SELECTION – RIO DE JANEIRO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2007

OFFICIAL SELECTION – HAIFA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2007

OFFICIAL SELECTION – CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2007

CREDITS

CREW

Written and directed by	Sandrine Bonnaire
Co-written by	Catherine Cabrol
Cinematography	Sandrine Bonnaire, Catherine Cabrol
Editing	Svetlana Vaynblat
Sound	Jean-Bernard Thomasson, Philippe Richard
Music	Nicola Piovanni, Jefferson Lembeye, Walter N'Guyen
Produced by	Thomas Schmitt (Mosaïque Films)
With support from	The Région Poitou-Charentes, the Département de la Charente, the Région Champagne-Ardenne, the Centre National de la Cinématographie, Procirep – producers' society, Angoa, with the participation of France 3, Swiss French Television (TSR), and RTBF – Belgian Television

Sandrine Bonnaire's Letter of Intent

This film chronicles the life of my little sister Sabine who is autistic. She was only diagnosed in 2001.

There's one year difference between us. As a little girl, she lived at home with our family and went to a special school for mentally handicapped children. She was a happy and vivacious child with lots of abilities. In particular, she could read and write. Around the age of 12, my parents decided, along with the special school, to enroll her in the same junior high as my brothers and sisters and myself. But Sabine wasn't like the other kids. Her behavior was a little out of sync. She would talk to herself, sometimes giggle on her own and often repeat the same sentence over and over. It didn't take long before the students started making fun of her and nicknamed her "Crazy Sabine". The humiliation made Sabine turn self-destructive. She would scratch her face, bite herself, scream and take off her clothes out in the playground. She became impossible to handle. Sabine was expelled and never went back to school again; she stayed at home until the age of 27. During these years, she became deeply interested in many things. She studied English, knitted sweaters, made rag dolls, learned to play music on a little Bontempi piano and developed a penchant for geography. Fascinated by the idea of different time zones, she dreamed of traveling to distant countries. In 1987, I took her on her first trip to the West Indies, and used the occasion as a good excuse to buy a camera. I wanted Sabine to have some memories of our adventure. It was an unforgettable trip for us both. We started taking other trips together, always with the camera in tow. I loved filming her and it became a game between us.

In 1996, her world turned upside down. Our oldest brother passed away. My mother decided to move to the country and took Sabine with her. The shock of the death, which she never came to terms with, and the distance separating us made Sabine turn violent, not towards herself this time but towards others, notably our mother. Sabine became dangerous and they had to be separated. My sisters and I decided to send her to a psychiatric hospital to get a doctor's opinion. Sabine was institutionalized for two weeks. She came out after a light treatment, but at that point, she still had not been diagnosed.

It took five years before Sabine would end up in a place adapted to her needs.

She went from one hospital to the next. At the end, she was not the same person at all. Her capacities were irreparably diminished.

The desire to make this film came to me when I realized that my sister had greatly declined. Between the endless talk of doctors on "the illness" that's evolving and an inappropriate treatment program, I grew angry and above all

nostalgic for Sabine's beauty and vivacity. From time to time, I would re-watch the films of our vacations.

These archives gave me the idea to make a parallel between the past and present, what Sabine was, and what she's become. I integrated the footage from before with that of today. Last year, I filmed her for several months in her everyday life.

Since 2001, my sister has lived in a center in Charente. Little by little, she's learning to enjoy life again, but most of her faculties remain altered. Why must Sabine relearn what she already knew? The goal of this film is to make other people aware of the handicap and get public authorities to take action. Why are there so few specialized centers in France? I want to emphasize the fact that a hospital is a place of treatment, hence transition, and in no way a place to live. Spending five years there makes one crazy.

Sandrine Bonnaire – Selected Filmography

- 2007 **COULD THIS BE LOVE ?** Dir. P. JOLIVET
2004 **THE LIGHT** Dir. Ph. LIORET
2004 **THE GIRAFFE'S NECK** Dir. S. NEBBOU
2004 **INTIMATE STRANGERS** Dir. P. LECONTE
2003 **RESISTANCE** Dir. T. KOMARNICKI
2001 **C'EST LA VIE** Dir. J-P. AMERIS
2001 **MADemoiselle** Dir. Ph. LIORET
1999 **AT THE HEART OF THE LIE** Dir. C. CHABROL
1999 **EAST-WEST** Dir. R. WARGNIER - *Nominated César 2000 « Best Actress »*
1998 **STOLEN LIFE** Dir. Y. ANGELO
1998 **SECRET DEFENSE** Dir. J. RIVETTE
1997 **DEBT OF LOVE** Dir. A.s GRUBER
1996 **THE CIRCLE OF PASSION** Dir. C. FINCH
1995 **A HUNDRED AND ONE NIGHTS OF SIMON CINÉMA** Dir. A. VARDA
1995 **A JUDGEMENT IN STONE** Dir. Claude CHABROL – « *Prix d'interprétation* » 1995
at the Venice Film Festival - Nominated César 1996 « Best Actress »
1994 **JOAN THE MAID 2 : THE PRISONS** Dir. J. RIVETTE
1994 **SECRETS SHARED WITH A STRANGER** Dir. G. BARDAWILL
1994 **JOAN THE MAID 1 : THE BATTLES** Dir. J. RIVETTE
1992 **PRAGUE** Dir. I. SELLAR
1992 **THE PLAGUE** Dir. L. PUENZO
1991 **THE SKY ABOVE PARIS** Dir. M. BENA
1991 **TOWARDS EVENING** Dir. F. ARCHIBUGI
1990 **CAPTIVE OF THE DESERT** Dir. R. DEPARDON
1989 **M. HIRE** Dir. Patrice LECONTE - *Official Selection 1989 at the Cannes Film Festival - Nominated César 1990 « Best Actress »*
1988 **A FEW DAYS WITH ME** Dir. C. SAUTET
1988 **THICK SKINNED** Dir. P. MAZUY
1987 **THE INNOCENTS** Dir. A. TECHINE
1987 **JAUNE REVOLVER** Dir. O. LANGLOIS
1987 **UNDER SATAN'S SUN** Dir. M. PIALAT - *Palme d'or 1988 at the Cannes Film Festival*
1986 **THE PRUDE** Dir. J. DOILLON
1985 **POLICE** Dir. M. Pialat
1985 **A BETTER LIFE** Dir. R. VICTOR
1985 **VAGABOND** Dir. A. VARDA - *César 1986 « Best Actress »*
1984 **FIRE ON SIGHT** Dir. Marc ANGELO
1984 **BLANCHE AND MARIE** Dir. J. RENARD
1983 **TO OUR LOVES** Dir. M. PIALAT - *César 1984 « meilleur Espoir Féminin »*

QUOTES:

“[Sabine] is the most beautiful film that Cannes has given us this year... It's cinema at its purest,” – FIPRESCI (International Federation of Film Critics)

“[Bonnaire] makes a touching, educational directorial debut... a thoughtful look... Deeply human documentary... will engage TV viewers worldwide and is a fine tool for discussing the toll on loving families when a proper diagnosis and appropriate treatment are withheld or unavailable.” – Lisa Nesselson, Variety

“You may have seen films about people with mental and physical illnesses, but you've never seen it handled this expertly.” – Ain't It Cool News