

1DIVIDED FILMS & CYNTHIA PINET
PRÉSENTENT

MARIE BUNEL

RENÉ HEGER

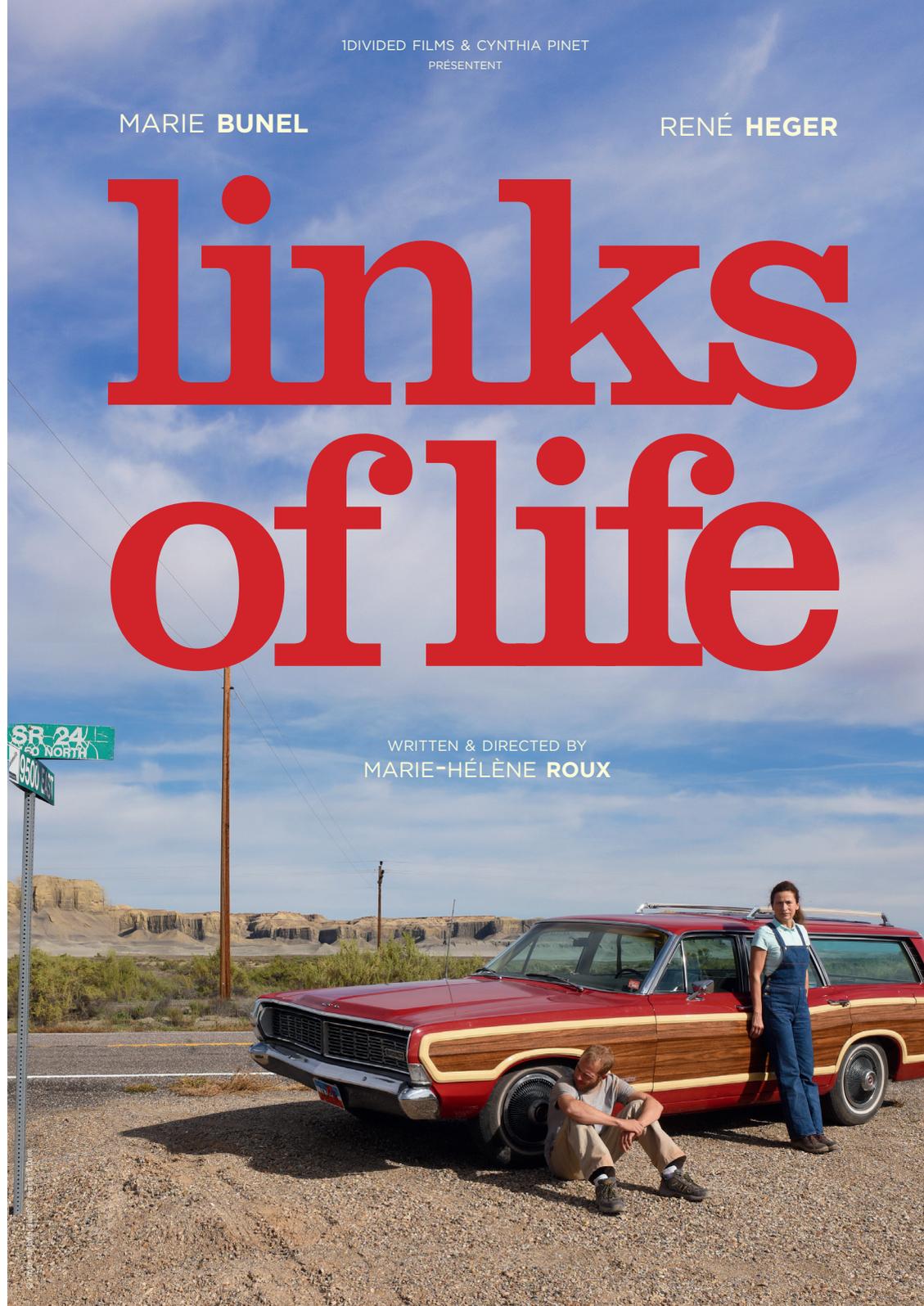
links of life

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY
MARIE-HÉLÈNE ROUX



1divided
FILMS

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PRESENT

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1H47 - FRANCE - 2016 - SCOPE - COLOR - DCP

PRODUCTION



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SYNOPSIS

Marion is a marginal fifty-year-old French woman who has always lived with her mother. Born with an obsessive-compulsive disorder, society's codes escape her and complicate relations with others. Following the death of her mother, she pursues her dream and flies to America. In Utah, amid the immensity, beauty and emptiness, she meets *Rob*, a thirty-year-old American man with an enigmatic past..





THE STORY

Due to our limited budget, my challenge was to make a film based on two main characters, without costume changes and to shoot in natural locations. As in my previous films I wanted to write a story that would be person driven, with «outcast» characters, that the audience could identify with their ideals, their strengths and weaknesses. I am intrigued by those we first judge and reject, but whom we ultimately learn to love. Marie Bunel has a natural innocence and naivety so I wanted to push «the difference» in *Marion*, her character, even further by giving her obsessive-compulsive disorders. Through this marginal woman's journey, I wanted the viewer learn to LIVE ... just as she does. I then imagined *Rob*, a thirty-year-old American man who survives the death of his son. *Rob* is desperate, angry and disillusioned about his country, in contrast to *Marion* who came to realize her dream in the American West. As opposite as they appear, both have chosen to see life from a single perspective and their own definition.

INTERVIEW WITH MARIE-HÉLÈNE ROUX (WRITER-DIRECTOR)

AT THE BEGINNING

There is ... a madwomen's dream, because it's the trio that we have created from the beginning with Cynthia Pinet («my» producer) and Marie Bunel («my» actress), that has been the driving force of this adventure. We first worked together on a first short film, then a medium-length film, and to take this leap together was obvious. A crazy gamble because *Links Of Life* was my first feature film, as well as my producer, although her resume is already quite full. As for Marie Bunel, while being a wonderful actress, she is not «bankable» and no investors would commit on her name alone. Faced with this «impossible» task we got inspired by the American model to finance the film and Cynthia secured the full funding from private funds. And when we talk low budget independent film it means making financial compromises, wearing many hats, and demonstrating a tremendous power of adaptation both in human terms as well as logistics. Looking back, I think these obstacles have encouraged me to tap into more creativity and offered me total artistic freedom. Cynthia secured the funding before I was even done polishing the latest version of the script. Writing and filming occurred in just six months. One must be crazy to make films, and fortunately we are!

THE THEMES

I often address them in the form of questions because it is so difficult to bring answers to:
What does it mean to be useful? To whom? How do we accept the loss of a loved one?
Is life easier in another country, on another continent?

How do we live with our social, cultural or physical differences?

I think that *Marion* touches us through her envy of the world - something that is rooted in each of us; through her desire to start anew, to pursue her dream and because she also represents the child within who doesn't want to grow and whom we sometimes wish to find again.

Another important theme of the film is self-acceptance, of how we live beyond an illness, a difference, a language, a culture, a past. *Marion* has to live with her condition but even more so, with the way others look at her.

Similarly one can identify with *Rob* and his distress; we know what it feels like to hurt so much we are unable to move forward. *Rob* suffers from depression, an unacceptable disease in American society that only manufactures «super heroes». Beyond the dramatic plot of the story, it was crucial to me that the film, by all possible means (characters, backgrounds, image, music, humor) would be a hymn to courage, friendship and life.



THE STYLE

Visually, I've been nourished by my experience in the United States. I like to invite the viewer to enter into a cinematic universe, stepping into a sensorial experience, a bit like in a fairy tale. I am inspired by what I love in French cinema, the power of words, the dialogues and the richness of human relationships, while attaching great importance to the frame and camera movements. They bring poetry in contrast with the hardness of situations and exchanges that the characters may face. I like landscapes to be filmed like unique beings with their own emotion, and I especially love taking the time to film the silence, to stay alert to surprises, glances, accidents which are unanticipated. Not to be afraid to take a breath, for that is, I think, the beauty and the strength of cinema. With Senda Bonnet (D.O.P), we have shot *Links Of Life* in scope to capture the full extent of the scenery, to have a sense of immersion but also to create a distance, isolation and imbalance between the characters and the space

UTAH

It's the third character in the film. The choice of this state was so clear to me because no one can cross Utah without being moved by it. The first time I went in the middle of this immensity I was astonished by the beauty, colors, contrasts, lights, shapes of the rocks and ... silence. In front of this scenery, you cannot retreat; you are faced with yourself, because infinite landscapes are an illusion of escape. In this immensity, *Marion* and *Rob* can either lose or find themselves. But like anything worthy, to shoot twenty-five days in these majestic and yet capricious spaces has not been easy and it took us long efforts to chase time and light...

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

It is the country of extremes. I lived in Los Angeles for fifteen years, which bred my desire to convey the complexity of this country. I admire the optimism, the dream, the energy of its people, but I also know the cruelty of its economy, healthcare, and educational system. I wanted *Links Of Life* to reflect this paradox because it is a country and a culture that are part of my life. *Marion* worships more than anybody this idea of America that *Rob* constantly tarnishes because «it» didn't allow him to be fragile. And then, there is the barrier of language that brings humor with puns and misunderstandings. The English language is an integral part of the film storyline as it defines communication, and establishes the link with one another.

WORKING WITH ACTORS

That is what I am most passionate about, because I feel as if my acting journey continues through them. I cannot imagine making a movie without a big preparation upstream. To take the time to exchange, in the form of daydreaming, reading, dissecting the text and ultimately creating an imaginary world. Inevitably the script changes, evolves, and that's good so nothing stays static. Then comes the time for the scenes rehearsals right before filming that allows me to polish the shots and to adjust the camera movements to best serve the acting. This preliminary work also helps build greater trust with the actors and what interested me with Marie Bunel was to put her at risk, to shake all the work we had done together in our previous films in order to preserve her fragility. Marie has put in a tremendous amount of work, addition to the construction of the character she had to overcome the challenge of the language. René Heger and I worked together as actors several times when I lived in Los Angeles. With this new actor-director configuration we had to «reframe» our relationship. René is a passionate, relentless worker, with an ability to convey deep sensitivity. We defined and outlined his character together through emails and Skype and then he did his own preparation, his role demanded some lonesomeness. The duo *Marion-Rob* is pure alchemy.

And the pinnacle of this adventure for me was to direct a legend like Catherine Samie who portrays *Gisèle* the mother of *Marion*. Only a few minutes of her image on screen are sufficient to be reminded of her presence throughout the film.



MUSIC

It holds a crucial role because I believe that music highlights our inner melody. I needed for each character in the film to have their specific theme, but I also needed songs that punctuate the storyline. I had the chance to meet a gifted young composer Alexander Dudermel who was able to offer me many musical arrangements while respecting and immediately adhering to the sensitivity of the film. He read the script and composed *Marion's* theme overnight. Its composition was strong, vibrant, enthusiastic and innocent. The theme of *Rob* was more complex because I did not want a melody, but sounds, instruments and notes that would express *Rob's* inner confinement. The result is great; well I'm a real fan.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS

I like for the end of my films to be an open door so that each of us may find our own truth. Just to reflect on being human, its condition and to let the viewer question. We won't know what happens to *Marion* and *Rob* but the important thing is not what their future holds but the time they've spend together which has transformed each other's lives. As *Rob* says: «To be useful, is to be there for someone... even if it's only for a few days, a few hours, a few minutes. To be there for someone is to be useful ...»



MARIE-HÉLÈNE ROUX (WRITER-DIRECTOR)

Trained at the French National Conservatory, then with Dominique Leverd, to later attend the Stella Adler Academy of Acting in Los Angeles, Marie-Hélène has worked for several years on independent film production in Hollywood. Returning to France, in August 2012, after 15 years in LA, she made her directorial debut with «A Deported Life» (25 minutes). In 2014, she wrote and directed «Shortage of Children» (42 minutes), with Marie Bunel and Vincent Winterhalter, a film inspired by true historical events during the 60's in France, known as «Les Réunionnais de la Creuse». «Shortage of Children» obtained the support of the French Deputy from Reunion Ericka Bareigts and received an outstanding theatrical release on May 20th, 2015.

Marie-Hélène wrote «I Leave Here» with Award-Screenwriter Jennifer Deaton (Jack of the Red Hearts), and «Les Parenthèses du Sourire», two feature films in development.

Marie-Hélène is working with screenwriter Katie Swain on the film adaptation of the book «Panzi» by doctors Mukwege and Cadière who work on the reconstruction of the raped and mutilated

women in the Democratic Republic of Congo. «Links Of Life» shot in Utah (U.S.A) in late 2015, is her first feature film.

Marie-Hélène is represented by Jocelyne Resneau, Agence Play Time (Paris)

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

- 2016** PANZI (writing)
LES PARENTHÈSES DU SOURIRE (dev.)
I LEAVE HERE (dev.)
LINKS OF LIFE
- 2014** SHORTAGE OF CHILDREN
SAN FRANCISCO BLACK FILM FESTIVAL (U.S.A)
BEST FOREIGN FILM AWARD 2015
MIAMI INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL (U.S.A)
BEST MEDIUM FORMAT FILM AWARD 2015
BALTIMORE INTERNATIONAL BLACK FILM FESTIVAL (U.S.A)
BEST FILM AWARD 2015
RED ROCK FILM FESTIVAL (U.S.A)
AUDIENCE AWARD 2015
- 2012** A DEPORTED LIFE
AMSTERDAM FILM FESTIVAL (NETHERLANDS)
VAN GOGH AWARD 2013 (WORLD CINEMA SCREENWRITING) 2013
OUTFEST 2013 (U.S.A)
NOMINATION JURY AWARD 2013
SANTA MONICA INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL (U.S.A)
MENTION HONORABLE 2013



MARIE BUNEL

has appeared in over a hundred films under the direction of renowned directors such as Patrice Chéreau, Claude Chabrol, Bertrand Tavernier, Coline Serreau or Christophe Honoré. She studied at the Lee Strasberg Institute in Los Angeles before joining Blanche Salant at the American Center in Paris. Marie starred in the blockbuster «Les Choristes» by Christophe Barratier, which totaled over eight million admissions in France. A versatile actress, Marie works in films as well as in television, where she just finished the filming of «The Curious Beast» by Laurent Perreau with Arte France, and is currently on stage in the play of Terence Rattigan «La Version Browning» directed by Patrice Kerbrat. Marie Bunel was nominated for the César Award for Most Promising Actress (1993) for her role in «Couples and Lovers» by John Lvoff and most recently was nominated for Best Actress at the Australian Academy of the Arts Film and Television (2013) for her role in «An Accidental Soldier» by Rachel Ward.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

CINEMA

- 2016** LINKS OF LIFE - Marie-Hélène Roux
- LA BÊTE CUIEUSE - Laurent Perreau
- 2014** À COURT D'ENFANTS - Marie-Hélène Roux
- QUAI D'ORSAY - Bertrand Tavernier
- 2011** JAPPELOUP - Christian Duguay
- 2010** LA GUERRE DES BOUTONS - Christophe Barratier
- 2008** BELLAMY - Claude Chabrol
- 2006** TROIS AMIS - Michel Boujenah
- LA FILLE COUPÉE EN DEUX - Claude Chabrol
- 2004** SAINT JACQUES LA MECQUE - Coline Serreau
- 2003** LES CHORISTES - Christophe Barratier
- ARSÈNE LUPIN - Jean-Paul Salomé
- 1996** MA VIE EN ROSE - Chris Vander Stappen
- 1994** LES MISÉRABLES DU XX^e SIÈCLE - Claude Lelouch
- 1993** COUPLES ET AMANTS - John Lvoff
- 1984** LE SANG DES AUTRES - Claude Chabrol
- 1978** L'HÔTEL DE LA PLAGE - Michel Lang

THEATER

- 2016** LA VERSION BROWING - Patrice Kerbrat
- LES AFFAIRES SONT LES AFFAIRES
Claudia Stavisky
- 2015** LE SYSTÈME - Didier Long
- 2013** CENDRILLON - Opéra de Pauline Viardot,
mise en scène par Thierry Thieû Niang
- 2011** RÊVE D'AUTOMNE - Patrice Chereau
- 2003** LA BOUTIQUE DU COIN DE LA RUE
Jean-Jacques Zilberman





CYNTHIA PINET (PRODUCER)

has over 15 years of experience in the French film industry. Mentored by the producer Philippe Godeau (Pan European Company) for nearly eight years, she is now and has been for seven years, the Head of Finance of Memento Films alongside Alexandre Mallet-Guy.

Early 2012, Cynthia founded 1divided Films, her own Production Company and produced «A Deported Life» a 25-minute short film, directed by Marie-Hélène Roux starring Marie Bunel. In 2014, she produced a medium format film «Shortage of Children», a fiction inspired by true events called «Les Réunionnais de la Creuse» released in France in May 2015; which is extremely rare for a medium-length film.

Cynthia has completed production of «Links of Life», Marie-Hélène Roux first feature film whom she has accompanied since her directorial debut. She is currently developing two feature films: «Les Parenthèses du Sourire» and «Panzi» a movie adaptation of the book by the two renowned doctors Denis Mukwege and Guy-Bernard Cadière.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

1DIVIDED FILMS

- 2016** PANZI (writing) - Marie-Hélène Roux & Katie Swain
LES PARENTHÈSES DU SOURIRE (dev.)
Marie-Hélène Roux
I LEAVE HERE (dev.) - Marie-Hélène Roux & Jennifer Deaton
LINKS OF LIFE - Marie-Hélène Roux
- 2014** SHORTAGE OF CHILDREN - Marie-Hélène Roux
- 2012** A DEPORTED LIFE - Marie-Hélène Roux

MEMENTO FILMS

- 2016** THE SALESMAN - Asghar Farhadi
BEST SCRIPT AND THE BEST ACTOR AWARD CANNES 2016
MARGUERITE - Xavier Giannoli
WINNER 4 CÉSAR AWARDS 2016
- 2015** LOUDER THAN BOMBS - Joachim Trier
OFFICIAL SELECTION CANNES 2015
TAXI TÉHÉRAN - Jafar Panahi
GOLDEN BEAR BERLIN 2015
IDA - Pawel Pawlikowski
ACADEMY AWARD WINNER BEST FOREIGN FILM 2015
- 2014** WINTER SLEEP - Nuri Bilge Ceylan
PALME D'OR CANNES 2014
- 2013** THE PAST - Asghar Farhadi
OFFICIAL SELECTION CANNES 2013
- 2012** UNE SÉPARATION - Asghar Farhadi
ACADEMY AWARDS WINNER BEST FOREIGN FILM 2012

PAN EUROPÉENNE PRODUCTION

- LARGO WINCH - Jérôme Salle
LE PRIX À PAYER - Alexandra Leclère
MISTER NOBODY - Jaco Van Dormael
LES SŒURS FACHÉES - Alexandra Leclère
MARIAGES ! - Valérie Guignabodet



THE CAST

Marion
Rob
Gisèle
Claire
Camping attendant

Marie BUNEL
René HEGER
Catherine SAMIE
Becky WU
Rob DODD

THE FILMMAKERS

Writer & director
Producer
Cinematographer
Editor
Sound editor & mixer
Set decorator
Make up & hair
Costume designer
Music composer
1st assistant director
Line producer
Location manager
Executive producer
Co-executive producer
Production
In co-production with

Marie-Hélène ROUX
Cynthia PINET
Senda BONNET
Hugo LEMANT
Alix BREINL & Clément MALÉO
Zachary PARASKEVA / Ghislane MAATOF
Amélie SALOMON
Ilona DEYDIER
Alexandre DUDERMEL
Mark M. Greene / François Philippe
Cynthia PINET
Eduardo RICKETTS JR. / Antoine du MERLE
Cynthia PINET
Katie SWAIN
1DIVIDED FILMS
LINKS OF LIFE PRODUCTION